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THE PRINCE OF DESTINY



Yours faithfully
Sarath Kumar Ghosh


THE
PRINCE OF DESTINY
THE NEW KRISHNA

BY
SARATH KUMAR GHOSH

AUTHOR OF "1001 INDIAN NIGHTS"



LONDON
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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

THIS romance is a presentment of India by an Indian. It draws a picture of Indian life from the inside, with its social customs and moral ideals, its eternal patience, its religious fervour, its passionate love. The book also reveals the Indian view of the causes of the present unrest, and Britain's unseen peril in India. If Britain loses India, it will be by the neglect of such a warning. In the circumstances depicted it would need the extraordinary love of an extraordinary man like the hero to save Britain's cause.

Above all, this romance envelops the reader in the atmosphere of India as no work of a European has ever done, and is a storehouse of Indian information which could not be obtained from any other source. Withal, it unfolds a story full of dramatic interest and instinct with deep emotions.

A Play by the Author on the same theme will be produced in the United States in the coming winter.

October 1909.

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THE PRINCE OF DESTINY

BOOK THE FIRST

PREPARING FOR DESTINY: IN INDIA

CHAPTER I

THE VISION OF INDRAPRASTHA

LISTEN, my brother, and I shall tell you a story of India. *The* story, the one story India has awaited so long to enact. So listen, and be prepared to think, to feel, to weep, to smile. But above all be patient : unto the very end.

The story had its earliest beginning in the year 1877, a year memorable in the annals of modern India. The Great Queen, whom all India loved and still mourns—peace be to her soul!—was about to be proclaimed Empress, and for greater significance at Delhi, the capital of India for fifty centuries. Princes, rulers, even the pettiest chieftains were gathered together from the uttermost parts of India. From the historic

palace of the Great Moghuls even to the Ridge beyond the battlements a city of pavilions had arisen as if at the touch of a magic wand. Each pavilion, flanked by a dozen minor ones, indicated by its scheme of decoration the rank and eminence of its occupant, even his lineage: silver brocade and cloth-of-gold for one; blue, white and gold muslin for another; and the softest Kashmir shawls, dyed green, orange, pink, blue and white to represent the colours of Rajput heraldry, for the noblest of the Rajput Princes—the sons of the gods, the last of the dynasties of the Chohan, the Rahtor, the Sesodia, the Agnikool.

Through the middle of the city of pavilions stretched a broad road of fine red gravel strewn with minute flakes of mica, so that the sunbeams falling upon them, each a tiny mirror, sent back sparkling rays of gold, and gave to the road the appearance of a golden pathway. Avenues of palm, lotus and champak, and lawns and flower-beds on either side of the golden road completed the feast of colours.

My story begins on the day of that great Durbar and Proclamation. It was early dawn upon the Ridge. The city of pavilions, that had arisen like Aladdin's magic palace, lay beneath. Beyond it, towards the rising sun, still slumbered the Imperial City. A thin white mist glimmered like a mystic light above its golden cupolas and marble domes and minarets. Then in the centre of the veil there came to being a luminous disc, pink and orange, fringed with rays of blue and violet. A moment later the veil had vanished in the air, and like a radiant god the sun sat enthroned upon Imperial Delhi, embracing the earth in ten thousand arms.

“Il-lalla Allah illa ! Allah Akbar !”—the voice of the muezzin floated in the stillness of the morn from the topmost minaret of the Jūmma Musjid, then minaret and dome and cupola took up the call. “God is God, the Great, the Good !” And Delhi awoke at that call.

The voice of the West answered it, the voice of a hundred and one cannon placed upon the Ridge. Then the city of pavilions also awoke, and the two cities went forth to assemble together in the great amphitheatre that lay between. Built centuries before the Roman Coliseum, it had witnessed the battles of the great epics re-enacted with vivid realism in the days of the Hindu Emperors of Delhi, and contests of skill and valour, less heroic but more sensational, beneath the gaze of the Toork and the Moghul ; and having fallen into decay in these degenerate times, it had been rebuilt for the special purpose of this Durbar.

A short while afterwards the procession was formed, and India’s chivalry set forth for the amphitheatre : a hundred-and-one Maharajahs, Rajahs, Thakurs, and Nawabs, borne on a hundred-and-one white-tusked elephants. The stately creatures seemed conscious of the gaze of the vast multitude standing on either side, and bore themselves with royal dignity. Well they might. Each was draped in cloth-of-gold, and bore a howdah of solid silver encrusted with gems of a thousand hues. Each tusk was encircled with three rings of gold, each broad forehead fitted with a silver shield embossed with heraldic devices in many jewels. On some it was the blazing orb of day in gold and rubies, to tell the world that the Prince who sat upon the silver howdah beneath the canopy of crimson brocade claimed descent from the Sun. On others

it was the full moon chased in silver and diamonds, for the sons of the Lunar race. And yet a third with a flame of rubies upon a tripod of pearls to indicate that the Prince was the last representative of the dynasty of the Agnikool, the son of Agni the Fire-god.

A gorgeous cavalcade came behind each potentate : and that constituted a spectacle, a drama, a sermon, a prophecy unparalleled on earth. Too often in these fallen days an Indian Prince is persuaded by English friends or Anglicised-Indian friends to adopt the path of European progress and of modernism ; and forthwith the poor harassed Prince, anxious to show his enlightenment, acquires a collection of motor-cars and Maple's furniture. But the majority of them still adhere to the ways of their forefathers, at least in their domestic customs—wherein lies the last hope of India's mental, moral, and artistic regeneration. And not only these Princes, but also their courtiers and retainers : for even as a Prince may have succeeded to the throne of his forefathers for twenty centuries, so also his courtiers and retainers have done him service from generation to generation for twenty centuries, and in that time have not changed the customs of their office, ay, the manner of their garb.

So each cavalcade furnished a chapter from the ancient and medieval history of India as a living picture of the present. Mail-clad warriors upon champing steeds, some armed with sword and battle-axe, some with shield and lance, others with falchion and arquebus ; the steeds of all adorned with trappings of gold or silver, and nodding plumes of bright-hued feathers upon their heads.

In the Baroda cavalcade there came a team of white oxen, drawing a cannon of solid gold mounted on a silver carriage. From Alwar a dozen performing horses dyed blue and scarlet, and waltzing erect on their hind-legs for twenty yards at a time. For the flower of Alwar chivalry had once fallen on the field of battle, but their steeds had stood erect and walked round their bodies—in memory whereof their successors were accorded the privilege of waltzing before the lords of the earth.

The Kashmir giants, seven feet tall, and one even eight, walked beside the Nabha dwarfs. The men of Kotah came in short skirts that might have been called kilts, and playing on bagpipes. Their ancestors had played the bagpipes a thousand years before the Macgregors and Campbells, and claimed to be the original Highlanders—in proof whereof the men of Kotah in British days on being offered porridge and whisky had taken to them with avidity. A team of ten tall elephants followed in the Datia train, each carrying a large chandelier swaying from its tusks. The chandeliers were a badge of their hereditary office, for when the Rajah's ancestors had desired to give audience in encampment the elephants had stood around to illumine the scene.

Thus the procession passed, and the eye caught the glint of gold and silver everywhere, even upon visor and headpiece, and of encrusted gems upon sword-hilt. Among the European spectators the majority had come officially or for the purpose of sight-seeing; but there were some who possessed the soul of the poet, of the artist, who had come to the Durbar as to a feast of emotions. So they looked at the cavalcades and from

every group singled out a figure that aroused in them a thousand memories.

“There goes Tristan! Siegfried! . . . King Arthur! Ivanhoe!” And a hundred others that leapt back to life from the pages of European history. These spectators saw most: they saw India. As she is, as she was, as she ever will be.

The Princes dismounted and entered the amphitheatre; their retainers drew up in rank on either side. But upon the Ridge facing the amphitheatre a vast multitude had gathered together, the people of Delhi and neighbouring cities. They stood in serried ranks, a sea of human heads crested with rippling waves of turbans, yellow and green and pink.

An old man, bare-headed, clean-shaven, with sandals on his feet, came to them. The multitude were in holiday attire, a symphony of colours. He alone was in plain white: a white cotton dhoti of Manchester make, costing twelve pence, that fell short of his ankles; a cotton chudder draped around his shoulders. Yet the populace made way for him; for in his hand was the beggar's staff and at his girdle the beggar's bowl.

“Vishnu's blessings, my children,” he murmured in gratitude; “I have trudged far to see this.”

They gave him the front line to see better, for at that moment all eyes were eagerly turned to the dais in the amphitheatre. Above the dais there floated a canopy of Dacca's loveliest brocade, embroidered with the Rose, the Thistle, the Shamrock, and the Lotus—fit symbol of the union of Great Britain and India, of which this very Durbar was the truest credential. A crystal throne stood beneath the canopy, inlaid with golden effigies. Reposing upon the velvet cushion was

the Imperial Crown, a glittering mass of diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. A sceptre reclined by its side, scintillating sparks of fire from its diamond tip.

The Empress of India was not there. But instead her Imperial emblems sat upon her throne, before India's assembled Princes, potentates, and nobles.

Suddenly the heavy curtains behind the dais were parted, and a herald in blue and scarlet stepped forth, raised a silver trumpet to his lips and sent a loud blast to the west. The west answered it, for another trumpeter had appeared across the amphitheatre. Then another from the north, and another from the south. While yet the echoes were mingling in the air the curtains behind the throne were flung asunder, revealing two rows of stalwart men in white and crimson who held their swords aloft to form an arch. The Vicegerent of the Empress, arrayed in the full insignia of the Star of India, passed beneath it and stood before the throne. An instant hush fell upon the assembled host. As one man it arose to hear the words of promise. For the Chief Herald was now facing the amphitheatre, reading the Proclamation in the very words of Queen Victoria, announcing to all India tidings of joy, for henceforth she would be her Empress.

But what words of omen were these that followed? What message to the people of all India, aye, Princes and peasants alike?

"In your prosperity will be Our strength, in your contentment Our security, in your happiness Our highest reward."

The aged, white-robed form upon the Ridge that had heard the Proclamation read with bowed head, awoke from his dream. Had he indeed heard those concluding

words, or were they but an echo in his heart of a scene enacted nineteen years earlier in the self-same place, when Queen Victoria had first assumed direct control over India? The recollections of that earlier scene had lingered vividly in his memory, for in it he had perceived the attempt of a noble Queen to heal a breach between two sections of her subjects: the breach made by the English cannon in Delhi's gate. The old man looked down from the Ridge where the English cannon had been placed—and still saw the breach on the Kashmir Gate. He took that as a sign. For the words of the noblest Queen may be nullified by ministers, secretaries, aye, women of the bed-chamber.

He sighed and passed on with the multitude. A close-veiled woman with a child in her arms approached timidly and slipped into his bowl the oatmeal cakes she had carried in the folds of her dress.

"Lakshmi's blessings on thee and thine, my daughter," he murmured, and passed on. The multitude might give of their charity or not; but ask for alms he could not. A crowd of devil-dancers went by, jesting; wearing masks of demon faces, and firing squibs and crackers. A party of English spectators stood to watch.

"What monstrosities!" said a handsome young man, wearing a monocle. He had come to India for a winter's tamasha, as a change from his usual labour: which was handing tea and muffins at five o'clock to the pretty girls of his acquaintance at Grosvenor Square or Buckingham Gate—and rolling his own cigarettes.

The other Englishman of the party, scarred and bronzed, answered quietly: "Devils' faces usually are. They are celebrating the deliverance of Sita, the beautiful wife of Rama the demigod, from the hands

of the demons." For Colonel Wingate had not come for a winter's trip, and knew a little about India.

The devil-dancers saw the white-robed form, ceased to jest, and went by silently on either side.

"Who is that old beggar?" asked the young man.

Colonel Wingate did not answer. He was gazing at the old man. He saw the retinues of the Princes march past, and noted the salaam they gave him, cavaliers and men-at-arms alike. He knew that the salaam would have been accorded to every ascetic in India; yet a vague emotion surged through his heart.

"Who is that old man?" asked the prettiest girl of the party.

"Looks like a religious mendicant," the young man replied, fixing his monocle. "I hear India is as full of beggars as Italy. The easiest way to live is to beg."

"Or to spend your father's money," Colonel Wingate answered. Then he turned to the girl. "These men, my dear, are not permitted by their vows to beg. If they did they would receive, not honour, but contempt. As for that particular man, Viswa-mitra, he had no need for alms when I knew him."

She wondered. There was something in Wingate's tone and manner that impressed her and aroused her interest.

"Then do tell me who he is?"

"Rather, who he was. Twelve months ago Viswa-mitra was Her Majesty's Senior Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, and Acting Chief-Justice of Bengal."

"Poor man! Then he must have done something to lose his position?"

"Bribery, I should say," the young man suggested.

"He resigned office voluntarily, my dear," Wingate answered. "It is written in the Hindu scriptures that

a true Brahmin should give up all things at the pinnacle of his fame, and seek the Brahma-way : the way that leads to Brahma. So Viswa-mitra took up the beggar's staff and the beggar's gourd. I did not know then why he retired so suddenly and disappeared from his English friends. Now I see and understand."

There was high revelry that night in Delhi. The political functions were over, but the social yet remained. In the former East and West had been associated together ; the latter were intended for the West alone. The chief event was a State Ball in the historic palace of Delhi. The ballroom was the *Dewan-i-Am* (Hall of Public Audience), the throne-room of Shah Jahan, the mightiest monarch of his day. There he had received the homage of princes, potentates, aye of vassal kings, equally with that of his humblest subjects. Built in accordance with Oriental custom, its colonnades on the sides and front opened into corridors where the multitude could stand and see their Emperor upon his throne. My brother, you have read in the *Arabian Nights* that Aladdin's mother stood daily before her king till he noticed her and gave her audience. So also was the ancient custom in India, and the poorest widow had the right to stand face to face before her sovereign, state her grievance and demand instant justice. And Shah Jahan, autocrat that he was, with a jurisdiction equal to that of the Bourbons, the Hapsburgs, and the Romanoffs combined, and splendour transcending the glory of the kings of the earth combined, had to sit upon his throne of a morning and give instant justice according to his lights.

That night Viswa-mitra was strangely impelled

to stay in Delhi. But he could not : by his vow he must ever sleep beneath the stars, with no roof or canopy above him—save a call came to him to end his days in some special place. And the call had not yet come.

Prompted by a vague impulse at his heart, he stood that night beneath the portico beyond the corridors, and saw the brilliant spectacle in the Hall. The most fashionable men and women of London seemed to be transplanted there for the moment.

“ If there be an Elysium on earth, it is this, it is this ! ” Those words had been written by Shah Jahan upon his throne, and came to Viswa-mitra’s lips spontaneously. But the throne of Shah Jahan was no longer there ; instead he saw the coronets and the tiaras of English make.

He passed on, and a while after stood beneath the shadow of the *Dewan-i-Khas* (Hall of Private Audience). It was built by Shah Jahan for his beautiful Queen, Taj Mahal, the loveliest woman of her time. Even as he ruled an empire, she ruled him—but by love alone. After her death, as the world knows, he built her a mausoleum in memory of his love, which “ the power of man, the intellect of man, the ambition of man shall never equal.” The world still acknowledges that vow to hold true ; the mausoleum named after her still remains the noblest work of man on earth : “ begun by Titans, finished by fairies.” Upon its structure Shah Jahan spent a sum which in the present value of money would be equivalent to £40,000,000. If he did that after her death, there was nothing he would not do for her sake in life. So he had built for her this private hall, its roof and walls covered with the most delicate tracery in alabaster,

and the spaces between encrusted with gems of a thousand hues.

But now the hall was converted into a supper-room for the most favoured guests in the ball. Gone were the divans and cushions upon which Taj Mahal had reclined and her hundred maidens. Instead there were a score of tables bearing viands of varying grade and taste, from *pâté-de-fois-gras* to sirloins of beef and York ham.

Viswa-mitra saw the beef and the ham, and with bowed head passed on into the night.

"How long, O Brahma, how long?" It was scarce a whisper that escaped his lips.

No, my brother; you do him wrong. Perhaps he was not thinking of the beef and the ham, but of his call that was long in coming. The beef and the ham would have to be eaten ultimately, and had to lie somewhere before finding salvation in human stomachs. But he wished that they had lain anywhere but in Taj Mahal's boudoir. Where every inch of space was hallowed.

He went by the Kashmir Gate, past the city of pavilions, beyond the amphitheatre, and came to the Tombs-of-the-Kings. There he paused, thinking to find rest.

Delhi as an Imperial capital has had no equal on earth. Antioch and Nineveh have perished; Troy and Carthage, Thebes and Memphis, are no more: Delhi alone remains, though shorn of her beauty. Called Indraprastha at her birth fifty centuries ago, she was the prize for which the sons of the gods of Meru fought and died, and dying left their ashes enshrined in the Tombs-of-the-Kings for thirty centuries. Then Indraprastha became Delhi when the Chohan dynasty, the noblest

of the Rajputs, held sway over India. The sceptre passed from the Chohan to the Afghan, the Toork, the Moghul; but all made Delhi their capital, and themselves Indian Emperors of India, not alien. They kept inviolate the Tombs-of-the-Kings. Their Hindu predecessors had preferred the pyre to the sepulchre, but the gold and silver caskets containing their ashes reposed in state in that vast mausoleum for thirty centuries; and the Moslem Emperors, alike the Afghan, the Toork, the Moghul, erected their marble and alabaster sepulchres beside the gold and silver caskets.

And now the Tombs-of-the-Kings was converted into a billiard-room for the use of the British army. Why not? Mr. Thomas Atkins, who was regarded as the ultimate ruler of India, had to have his beer and skittles somewhere. Then why not in that huge structure that was lying idle and could be put to no other public use?

Viswa-mitra saw and passed on. "How long, O Brahma, how long?"—again the cry came to his lips, and again with bowed head he passed on.

A mile beyond, beneath the stars, he came to a group of broken pillars and colonnades, the relics of the first Delhi. Upon a slab, amid that solitude, he laid himself down to rest. Beneath him, thirty feet below the earth, lay the buried ruins of Indraprastha, the city of prophecy.

Viswa-mitra thought of Indraprastha, and slept. . . .

"See the walls of Indraprastha! The veil is lifting. See the myriad shields of gold and silver upon the marble walls, the ivory pillars at the Lion Gate and the trellised arches of scented sandal. See between the

arches the street of inlaid enamel, blue and pink, and yellow and crimson. See further: beyond the street a palace of whitest marble studded with diamonds and rubies and emeralds and sapphires. Enter within. . . .

"See the walls of alabaster draped in gold-wrought kincob. Read the painted poems upon the pillars, each recounting the history of a Prince. See further. . . .

"See the throne of burnished gold encrusted with gems. Canst see him upon the throne? It is the Prince of Destiny, the New Krishna! See, see—the Chohan, the Rahtor—the Sesodia, the Agnikool—all bow down before him and call him Master! For he sits upon the throne of Rama, holding the sceptre of *Hind*! . . .

"Sleeper, awake! Arise from the ruins of Indraprastha, and seek the New Delhi! This is thy call!"

Viswa-mitra awoke from his dream. All earth seemed to him to be singing with joy. He heard sweet melodies in the heavens, but whether he heard them in his ear or in his heart he could not tell. In the night he saw flowers blossoming on distant trees and creepers by the aid of some unseen light, but he knew not if he saw them in his mind or in his eye. In fear and awe he arose and left the plains, past cities and townships, woods and forests, till at early dawn he came to the Temple of Vishnu that lay between the Jumna and the Ganges. There the High Priest, Vashista, received him as a brother. But Viswa-mitra humbly asked for guidance.

"Tell me the beginning of things," he said. "For thirty years have I dealt with the laws of men—and have forgotten the beginning of things. Tell it to me!"

Then Viswa-mitra, who for thirty years had dealt with escheats and estoppels and affidavits, sat at the feet

of the High Priest like a child ; and the High Priest brought out an old book that contained the Vedas and the Shastras, and read from it :—

“ Darkness first there was, hidden in darkness beyond understanding.

“ Was there line spread forth aslant, or was it below, or was it on high ? Who knoweth in sooth, who here may tell, whence and from what was this world’s building ? The gods came afterwards in the building of this world ; then who knoweth whence it came ? Did He set it up or no He soothly knoweth who is warden over it in the highest heavens : or soothly He knoweth not. . . .

“ In the beginning Not-Being was not. All-Being alone was.

“ Then All-Being thought within itself, ‘ I will be many ; I will beget offspring.’ It brought forth Heat.

“ The Heat thought within itself, ‘ I will be many ; I will beget offspring.’ It begat Water.

“ The Water thought within itself, ‘ I will be many ; I will beget offspring.’ It brought forth Life and all creatures of the earth.

“ This is the wisdom, O beloved, whereby that which is not seen is seen, that which is not heard is heard, that which is not understood is understood. As by one clod of clay, O beloved, all things that are of clay may be understood, their several shapes being but an holdfast of speech, and their name being in truth clay. As by one copper toy, O beloved, all things that are of copper may be understood, their several shapes being but an holdfast of speech, and their name being in truth copper. As by one little iron nail, O beloved, all things that are of iron may be understood, their several shapes

being but an holdfast of speech, and their name being in truth iron. So is this beginning of wisdom, O beloved. . . .

“ Now listen, beloved, to the story of man’s regeneration. The All-Being took three shapes unto Himself ; Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. The earth was filled with mighty Danavas, giants and tyrants, who oppressed all men. Then Mother Earth went to the footstool of Brahma and wept. Brahma turned to Vishnu, and the Lord Vishnu said, ‘ I will take shape among men. I will be born of a royal house, even of the house of Rama.’

“ Soon after the celestial *rishi* (ascetic) Narada came to Vasudeva, who was of the house of Rama, and revealed to him that his Queen Devaki would bring forth a child that was the incarnation of Vishnu ; that the child should be named Krishna. But Kangsa, the King of the Danavas, who oppressed the earth, knew that the child was destined to dethrone him from his kingdom. So he sought to kill the child. He seized Vasudeva and Devaki, and slew seven of their children ; but warned by the celestial *rishi*, Krishna was sent away to Gokula and placed in the care of a hermit who was a devotee of Vishnu. Then in his rage the wicked Kangsa sent forth his Danavas who slew all new-born infants in Gokula, Braja, and the neighbouring cities. But Krishna was hidden in the hermitage. . . . Thus he grew up, and in time slew Kangsa and delivered man from his oppression.

“ Now listen, O beloved, to the coming of the New Krishna. For he will come again to rebuild the walls of Indraprastha where he had reigned as King in his first coming. Indraprastha, built by Krishna’s divine

puissance, shall never perish. Kings and Emperors shall pass away, but Indraprastha shall last for ever, and he that holds it shall be the suzerain of Barath-barsha.¹

“So listen, beloved, to the coming of the New Krishna. He will be born again of the house of Rama. At his birth all earth shall rejoice. The sky shall become luminous, and the waters of pools and rivers clear as crystal. Trees and creepers shall shoot forth clusters of fragrant blossoms, and the lotuses on every lake burst forth into flower. The forests shall be filled with the sweet humming of bees and the melodies of myriads of winged choristers. In the sky above celestial kettle-drums shall be heard, and soft winds shall arise, bearing the music to distant cities.”

“Enough, brother, enough!” Viswa-mitra cried in mingled fear and joy. He gazed into space, as if trying to recall a vision, then in an awed whisper ejaculated, “I have seen and heard all that! Yes, yesternight—when I slept upon Indraprastha!”

He related his dream, the vision he saw, the call he heard—and all else that he saw or heard, or felt in his inmost heart.

The High Priest marvelled. With hope and fear at his heart, he searched for the records of the house of Rama; for the Temple of Vishnu in his charge was the special repository of the chronicles of the house of Rama. Rama, Krishna's predecessor, was an earlier incarnation of Vishnu. Even as Krishna came to regenerate fallen man, so Rama had come to glorify man in his

¹ The Kingdom of Barath, that is, India. Historically this prophecy has been amply fulfilled: the possessor of Delhi has always been the suzerain of India.

pristine innocence. So the High Priest would have held.

Rama ruled long and wisely, and died leaving progeny—from whom some of the reigning dynasties of India to-day claim descent. But his kingdom—that is, India—was named after his brother, Barath, who reigned on his behalf and as his vicegerent when Rama had gone forth to conquer Southern India and Ceylon.

So the High Priest searched in mingled fear and hope the chronicles of the dynasties that claimed descent from Rama. But there were many, and he was without light. He sent for Ramanand (lover of Rama), a young priest and keeper of current records.

“Tell me, my son, the names of all the ranis, princesses, even thakuranis, who have come to pray here for a male child.”

“Many have come for a male child,” Ramanand answered, “but few have been deemed worthy.” He read through his book and mentioned each suppliant, the date of her visit, and if the prayer was granted the date of the thanksgiving.

“Koikai, the wife of Barath, Maharajah of Barathpur, childless. Has prayed seven times in seven years. After four years her prayer was heard, but the child was a daughter. For three years more has she prayed for an heir, the last time five moons ago—when her prayer was not all supplication, but in part a thanksgiving for even a hope. The realisation of that hope is now due.”

The High Priest started. A wild tumult raged in his heart. “I accept the sign, O Vishnu!” he murmured, bowing his head. “Barath of Barathpur! This indeed is thy manifestation, O Preserver!”

He turned to Viswa-mitra. "Brother, come with me. Henceforth thy path and mine are one. Let us hasten to Barathpur ! "

And the two men arose, each with but a staff, and turned their faces to Barathpur.

CHAPTER II

THE NAMING OF BARATH

THE child was born of India's and the world's noblest dynasty ; there reigns not a sovereign on earth with lineage more ancient than that of Barathpur. When Rome was not built, when Tyre and Carthage were yet unbegotten, the house of Barath reigned supreme over India. And now when the irreverent tourist from Balham or Ohio carves his name into immortality upon the pyramids of Egypt, when the dried mummies of the Pharaohs are sold like kippered herrings in the markets of Europe, the last of the race of Rama of the house of Barath still survives the shock of time. Gone are the Assyrians, the Medes and the Persians ; unmourned is venerable Troy ; even the tomb of great Cæsar is now unearthed amid the laughter of a vulgar multitude. Alone among the ancients the sons of India's demigods still dwell among men. But gone is their ancient glory : Krishna has mounted to heaven—and his faithful war-horse Kalkin still weeps with the sons of Rama for his return. Their eyes are dimmed, their manes uncombed, their hoofs unshod, their nostrils breathe no more the fire of victory. . . . Pardon these recollections, reader, for I too am of the house of Barath. But what is Rama to me, what is Barath to me ? I have become a scribbler. Do you hear that ? A

scribbler—a man who barter his soul with the mob for the food the mob will fling to him. Shades of my forefathers, poets, seers, princes, forgive me ! I have become a Western—and reticence is dried out of my bones.

Let us turn to Barathpur. On the eighth day the child was named. His father called together a thousand Brahmins ; half that number were already gathered in anticipation : pundits from Benares, from Nadya, from Gaya—yea, hermits and recluses from Harthawar and Tarakeshwar and Pareshnath : and in the courtyard of his palace he feasted ten thousand poor, so that their blessing also might rest upon the child. But in his pride of fatherhood he did what none of his brethren had done before : he asked his English friends, five men and five women, to come also. Forsooth the chief of that party was Colonel Wingate, who was not like other men ; for, having come to India to command a thousand men, he had stayed to learn things that mattered more than echelons and entrenchments. Yet his coming to the naming of the child was an innovation, which might make or mar the child's future destiny.

Behind the throne-room the mother reclined upon a divan, seeing through the thin curtain, yet invisible herself. A close-veiled nurse brought the child and held him up to the view of the assembly. A new-born babe of the highest caste, and descended from the purest of the Aryan race, should be of the blended hue of the deepest rose and the lightest olive, though indeed in after days the sun may darken it to the hue of bronze. The nurse avowed that she had counted full forty times the signs of sacred birth, and found them to be two-

and-thirty in number. Then the assembly bowed their heads and marvelled.

The venerable High Priest of Sarasathi, the oldest of the Brahmins there present, anointed the child's brow with scented *chânnan*, saying :—

“Barath, the son of Barath, thou shalt be. O babe, mine eyes have seen the signs of sacred birth. But the fulfilment of their promise I shall never see, dying too soon, though but yesterday I had longed to die.”

The High Priest of Vishnu anointed the hands and feet, saying :—

“O babe, it shall be mine to guide these hands to noble deeds, and these feet to walk in the path of truth. But, O babe, thou art destined to be the teacher of thy teachers. Thou, not I, art guide !”

For the sacred thread of the twice-born, the child's father stood up before the assembly and placed around the babe's neck a garland of pearls. Then all ascetics, *sadhus* and hermits, came forth and gave him their blessing.

But Viswa-mitra held the child in his arms, and could not speak.

Then moved by some strange impulse, Colonel Wingate took the child and gazed into his face. Still gazing, he spoke to the father :—

“Some day the child will grow up. *Gurus* and teachers he will have here. But perhaps you will also send him to England to finish his education. Then send him to me. I would be his guide and guardian.”

And the father answered, “I promise.”

Then one of the Englishwomen, the pretty girl who had been lightly seeing the sights of Delhi but a week before, arose from her seat, stirred by some inward emotion, and took the child in her arms. Laying

her face upon his face she kissed him in silence, and in silence also returned to her seat. . . .

That evening a vast multitude gathered in the courtyard to partake of the bounty of the palace ; but to the populace it was merely because an heir had been born at last to perpetuate the ancient dynasty of their ruler. Any other element in the character or destiny of the child did not enter into their thoughts. The parents indeed had now a vague, intangible perception of the mere possibility of some special eminence intended for the child, though in what direction they knew not yet. But to the multitude the festivities were of the material order, which, among mortals, demigods and cannibals alike, implies eating and drinking inordinately.

A group of people stood by the palace gate ; in their eyes a sudden look of apprehension had entered.

“ Brothers, this morn I was bathing an hour before sunrise, and even as the morning star was paling in the east, I saw——”

“ What sawest thou, O Seer ? ” a mocking voice asked from the back of the throng. It was a trooper drunk with the day’s festivities.

“ —A ball of fire falling from heaven far away on the west,” continued he that had spoken, ill-clad, wild-eyed and unkempt.

There was an instant hush. “ An omen ! An omen ! ” —a vague whisper passed.

“ And then, O brother ? ”

“ The ball of fire came swiftly nearer the earth in a line of white light ; then when it stood over the palace it suddenly turned blood-red, and burst into ten thousand fragments. Yet, O brothers, I heard no sound ! ”

"Aye, but a moment later a gentle shower of rain blotted out the red sparks from the sky." It was a meek-faced Vishnuvite that gave this hope.

Then a passer-by who had read many books and had graduated at the Bombay University, laughed aloud. "O foolish brothers, it was 'but a meteor! It burst, not over the palace, but three *kos* (six miles) beyond, and a full *kos* from the earth. And the rain came because of the disturbance in the clouds."

But a snow-bearded oracle, who had heard all, rebuked him, saying, "Thou dost see only with the eye of the body. Canst not read also with the eye of the soul?"

"Read to us this message, O man of wisdom," the populace asked.

"I know not," the old man answered. "I merely fear—and hope."

"What dost thou fear?"

"That some day a flaming torch shall come to the child from out of the West, shall surround him in its flame, burn in his heart, permeate his very soul."

"And thy hope?"

"That the *karma* of a thousand years, the accumulation of graces in previous incarnations, will descend upon him in a gentle shower, and give him back his destiny. At least that is my hope and prayer."

As men walking in their sleep the multitude dispersed. One only remained—the drunken trooper, now drunk no more. He crept into the palace and told his wife what he had seen and heard. She carried the message to the child's mother. And the mother clutched the child to her heart, and called him disparaging names: thinking thus to hoodwink God,

who was jealous of her love. For as yet she knew not that her child was unlike any other child, and feared that too much rejoicing might arouse divine jealousy.

Vashista, the High Priest of Vishnu, was troubled in mind. That the child would attain eminence of some kind he felt sure. The birth-marks, on the very rare occasions on which they had been noted, had never failed in Hindu history to denote that eminence and to realise it. But the exact nature of the distinction meant for the bearer of the signs had ever been in doubt in the past, till the favoured one had entered into the fullest manhood—that is, had actually attained the means of stamping his personality on the history of his times; and it was just possible that only the few who had achieved subsequent distinction were remembered: the others that had failed, though also possessing the marks of fate, were forgotten. This element of doubt did not escape the subtle mind of the High Priest: the birth-marks alone were not sufficient.

But their number—exactly two-and-thirty? To the European mind that might indicate nothing more than a meaningless symbolism. Why thirty-two, any more than twenty-two or forty-two? The High Priest would answer, "Because the Almighty Himself has chosen that number in His revelations to denote the one He will send. Had He chosen forty-two, it should be forty-two; if twenty-two, then twenty-two." To Vashista that was sufficient, for he would have doubted the Hindu Shastras less than a Roman Cardinal might the four Gospels.

To him the cause of anxiety was subtler. He did

not doubt the promise of high destiny made to the child by the manner of his birth—the marks themselves, and the other and extraneous signs described by Viswa-mitra at the hour of birth. But the destiny would have to be accepted by the child when he became a man; for the Almighty Himself could not force a destiny upon the humblest creature whom He had endowed with the gift of free-will—who would choose to drink of his chalice, or not to drink. No doubt in the special case of the supremest destiny possible to man—to be the new Krishna—there would be given a consciousness of it together with the destiny, thereby tending to ensure its acceptance and fulfilment. But the consciousness might not come till late in life—and many things might have happened meanwhile.

That was the exact nature of the anxiety in the High Priest's mind. When the child grew up his environments might be such as to delay the consciousness, or to obscure it altogether. Even that was possible, for the doctrine of karma was absolute—which meant that the smallest conscious act must bear fruit, good or evil, and a single wilful deed in childhood or early youth might set in motion a series of consequences undesired or unexpected, yet immutable. The child's small hand might cast a stone upon the pool, and regret the act the instant after: yet the last ripple must then reach the distant shore in the fulness of time, heaven and earth notwithstanding.

Thus the High Priest vowed in that hour to devote the rest of his life to the task of safeguarding the environments of the Prince in childhood, in youth, in early manhood. He vowed that no adverse influence

should cross the Prince's path to make him doubt the call when it was given to him in the fulness of time.

Here lay the very peril he vaguely feared : he could not always control the complex influences that must necessarily pass over the Prince's mind and heart in the years to come. The child's father had passed his word that in the years of youth he should go to England to receive at least in part his mental and moral training. The High Priest wished in his inmost heart that he had been able to reveal to the father the high hopes he entertained of the child's future, and thus perchance have avoided the promise. But now it was too late—and perchance in the very fact that the child would irrevocably come under English influence there was an element of comfort : for if, notwithstanding such an influence in the most impressionable years of his life, he still received the call on his return to India, his high destiny would be but strengthened by resisting so intense and absorbing a temptation. Meanwhile Vashista vowed that he would prepare his own mind and heart to combat the effect of that English influence on the Prince should it threaten to prove adverse to his destiny.

"Tell me, my brother," he asked of Viswa-mitra, "what sort of man this Colonel Wingate is? Thou didst know him well."

"For twenty years," Viswa-mitra answered. "And for twenty years I found in him a true Christian, even according to his own Christian standard."

"Then I fear him all the more!" The High Priest thought within himself awhile. "He will give to the Prince the finest presentment of England, not the worst, and thus perchance may capture his heart.

Verily we have nothing to fear from the worst that is in England, or even from the innocuous but commonplace; it is in the good that is in England wherein I see our gravest peril. How can I prepare myself to meet it? Brother, help me! Thou dost know England well."

Viswa-mitra bowed his head. "It was my privilege to study the ideals of England: her arts, her literature, her political history—aye, the law and the prophets of England."

The High Priest was wrapt in the deepest thought. A great struggle was raging in his heart. Then he also bowed his head.

"Brother, teach them to me," he humbly asked. "Teach me the ideals of England."

Viswa-mitra marvelled. "It may take ten years," he said, "and we are both old."

"For ten years I shall learn at thy feet."

"It may take twenty."

"For twenty years shall I learn at thy feet."

Then Viswa-mitra doubted no more. But the task was great indeed. The High Priest, learned in all things Eastern, had no conception of the smallest Western thought, ideal, or knowledge: in fine, to teach him step by step all the lessons of Western civilisation would be like teaching a child. So Viswa-mitra began from the beginning.

They sat beneath the porch, Viswa-mitra with chalk in hand, the High Priest by his side.

"Brother, I shall begin with the English alphabet; and as I write each letter I shall give its sound." The High Priest bowed silently, whilst Viswa-mitra wrote upon the flagstones.

"This is A. This B; and this C" Thus he taught the beginning of English culture to the High Priest of Vishnu.

A while after he taught him to spell. "C-a-t cat. D-o-g dog. . . ."

What scene was this, what marvel? Verily a scene quite typical of the East, and quite unlike anything enacted in the West. Nine days before the Senior Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta had sat at the feet of the High Priest of Vishnu and learnt like a child the beginning of things. And now in turn the High Priest of Vishnu sat at his feet and learnt to spell "c-a-t cat, d-o-g dog."

And both men were old; for in India a man is old at fifty. Of course there was a slender hope of using in the far future the knowledge of Western ideals the High Priest began to acquire so diligently. For if in India men are old at fifty, they are no older at eighty; and if they are fortunate enough to escape death at fifty, the odds are rather in their favour that they should live to be eighty, or even ninety, especially if their manner of living be abstemious, and their creature comforts the irreducible minimum. A pennyworth of rice, a pennyworth of lentil, a pennyworth of butter—the whole divided into two meals, one in the morning the other at sunset. Viswa-mitra and the High Priest lived on threepence a day each, and thus had every prospect of seeing their labour bear fruit in the years to come.

Thenceforth they lived in the palace of Barathpur as the guests of the ruler: that is, in one of the numerous buildings adjoining the main structure; for the historical palaces of India are composed not of one building, but of about a hundred, surrounded by

gardens, artificial lakes and streams covering a total area equal to that of Hyde Park. The ruler of Barathpur had appointed the High Priest his son's future *guru*, that is, spiritual guide and teacher—in Western terms, confessor and tutor combined. As for Viswamitra, he could sleep in the jungle under a peepul-tree with the wild beasts—and was equally welcomed in every palace in India. But as his call had brought him to Barathpur, he chose to stay in Barathpur and with his friend. Thus he was enabled in the years to come to impart to the High Priest a true knowledge of the ideals of England : the law and the prophets of England.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF BARATH'S DESTINY

THE child grew in years and in strength. Externally, except for the marks of fate, there was little to distinguish him from any other high-born child till his seventh year. Then it happened that his mother's mother came on a visit to the palace of Barathpur. She had not seen her daughter since giving her in marriage fourteen years before: ten years since the first child of the marriage was born, a daughter named Delini; seven years since the birth of the boy Barath. Living in a mountain fortress as yet unreached by the railway—which indeed she would have abhorred—a long journey to the venerable lady had almost the solemnity of a pilgrimage.

But now when her grandson was seven years old she undertook the journey and came in her palanquin, attended by a dozen handmaids and escorted by a hundred men. Being of the race of India's "belted queens"—those heroic women who had acted the part of a Boadicea or a Brunnhilde in the history of India for the past twenty centuries—she was privileged to wear her hair long in her widowhood; long and black and shining. And at sixty years of age it was all black as seen from a distance, and reaching down to her knees; though at close quarters a

few silver streaks might have been detected among the black.

When she reached the palace of Barathpur, her daughter, the Rani Koikai, the mother of the boy Barath, led him up to her, then held him aloft in her arms. She spoke to her mother, but gazed into the face of the child. For she knew that her mother's first thought also would be of the child.

"For seven years have I woven this cloth upon the loom," Koikai said, and there was the sound of tears in her voice. "See if the pattern be good."

And her mother, taking the child in her arms and gazing into his eyes, answered, "It is good."

Yet a while after she added, "But I know not how the ends will fit, O heart of my heart, for I see both gold and cotton in the fringe."

Hearing these words Koikai was troubled in mind, and straining the child to her heart she was silent. For she feared the coming conflict in his destiny. She was not like her mother of the heroic type of Sanjogini¹ and Podmini, but meek and gentle and womanly like Sita and Sakuntala.

They set the boy down, and, woman-like, began to make plans for his future—knowing full well that the will of fate and of man might upset them. . . .

Till that time the boy lived in the inner palace where no men came, save a priest or a physician. But there was an extensive garden at the back, exquisitely laid out in flower-beds, artificial pools, lakes, even miniature mountains. There he played with his sister Delini and a few of the children of privileged Thakurs, feudal

¹ The vowels in Indian proper names are pronounced as in Italian; hence the final "i" is always pronounced as "e."

nobles, whose wives came on frequent visits to the Rani. Barath would love to touch a hidden lever here which caused an instant torrent to roll down a mountain, to the intense delight of his small friends, or an innocent-looking tap there which sent down a shower of rain upon the flower-beds from the overhanging boughs of trees, within which were cunningly secreted innumerable water-pipes.

Yet Barath's greatest delight was when his friends had departed and he was left with Delini. Then the two children would go hand in hand, and make the circuit of the garden, gathering flowers—or, casting off shoes, dipping their feet in the limpid pool. Meanwhile Delini would talk to him all the time, telling him wondrous tales from the annals of their own house, with running comments of her own; for she had heard them all from her mother, and knew them by heart.

“And remember, brother, that the women of ~~thy~~ house are the noblest on earth,” she would always add as a final admonition.

Barath listened in admiration. Chivalry was the one conspicuous element in the history of all “Rajasthan,”¹ but of Barathpur in particular: whenever in the past Barathpur had suffered, it was not due to the want of valour in her sons or heroism in her daughters, but to too much clemency to a vanquished foe. And the lessons that Barath was to learn in many years from scholars and pundits were anticipated in part in a few days by Delini. Though but ten years of age herself, her power was great over Barath.

Owing to the mere fact that she was the elder, Barath

¹ Rajputana. Rajasthan means “The Land of Princes,” Rajputana “The Domain of the Sons of Kings.”

had to reverence his sister above all the women of the earth, save his mother : and his mother was next after the goddess Durga. Every morning he had to kneel at the feet of his parents, and make them obeisance as the human instruments of his Creator ; next after them Delini—for in the absence of his mother Delini was her vicegerent. That is the actual house-law in a Hindu family.

“Thou dost know nothing yet, brother mine,” Delini said to Barath. “But I shall teach thee many things till—till—I am married.”

“When will that be ? ” Barath asked wonderingly.

“Perhaps when I am fifteen, perhaps seventeen. Not before fifteen, not later than seventeen. The women of our house in the past always chose their own husbands from amongst the assembled suitors, wherefore were old enough to choose the noblest and bravest of them.”

“And now ? ”

“Our parents will choose for me wisely,” Delini answered in perfect faith. “But now let us continue our lessons.”

She taught him the customs of their caste, the legends and traditions of their dynasty—aye, the memories and associations of Barath-barsha. Here, upon this rock, sat sorrowful Sita in her weary exile ; upon this rose-bush was caught Sakuntala’s veil when she was snatched up to heaven in Indra’s ivory chariot ; upon this lotus-bed stood the goddess Sarasati when she inspired the poet Kalidas to write his magic verse. Beside this pool lay love-sick Prithiraj, Emperor of all India, thinking of his lost bride Sanjogini, and unconsciously feeding the fishes with his necklace of pearls, bead by bead ; and here behind him stood, all

unknown, Sanjogini herself with veiled face—till reading the proof of his love in his absorption she handed to him *her* necklace when his own had come to an end, just to revel a while longer in the proof of his love. All these memories Delini taught her little brother. For in India almost every grove and glade, pool and rivulet, valley and mountain, is associated with the history of a demigod. . . . O ye gods, what taste, what choice ! A burglar came to my brother's house one night, picked up the paste, and left untouched the real diamonds lying beside. So also the prophets of Europe came to India, picked up *The City of Dreadful Nights*, and lepers and beasts and devils ! What depravity of taste ! . . .

For twelve months Delini taught her brother all that she knew ; then he passed to the outer palace. Henceforth he was to live with men. He might indeed visit his mother and sister in the inner palace as often as he pleased, and in fact still spent half his days with them ; but the rigorous traditions of his dynasty, twenty centuries old, demanded that in his eighth year his mental and moral, no less than his bodily training, should pass into the hands of men. First his father.

Every morning his father held a miniature court, not quite of the magnitude of the past, yet still of the same form and formality. Which meant that he sat upon his throne-of-justice in the hall-of-audience in sight of his people. The officials of the State made their reports personally, and in the hearing of the public, while the State chronicler wrote down what was reported. Then the officials of the palace gave an account of their stewardship, which was recorded by the Court chronicler. Afterwards the populace, standing at the

back of the hall, were bidden to step before the throne and state their cause, if any. And to teach his son the formalities of State from an early age the ruler of Barathpur had the boy brought to him, and made him stand by his knee or sit beside him ; at first for a brief while lest he should be tired, then at last through the entire audience. And all the while the boy's mother would watch him with beaming eye from her divan behind the translucent curtain beyond the throne, and note the dawn of princehood in him in the interest he took in the functions.

After the audience his father would take him to the courtyard adjoining the fields, to witness some feat of arms, or for a ride—the father on an elephant, the boy on a pony. Among the escort was Moolraj, the Captain of the Palace Guards. With bated breath he watched the boy : did he but rouse his little pony for a gallop Moolraj would bring his own big charger a lance length behind, and just keep that distance throughout. And if Barath wished to alight, or dropped a glove, or desired anything to be done, it was always Moolraj who came alongside first. His vigilance was more than what could have been due to the tenderest solicitude : for there was in it a fierce joy, a fierce passion, to render the smallest service, and earn a merit that seemed more than of earthly need. When he touched Barath's feet to guide them to the stirrups he felt a thrill surging through his frame which the embrace of man or woman had not aroused.

For Moolraj had divined what Barath's parents had not.

O mystery of parental love ! Its very intensity seems to concentrate it and narrow down its vision to

but one aspect of the loved one : to the parents the child is but their child—and what else he might be is of lesser moment.

Moolraj, brave and blindly faithful—yet endowed with the crude perception of the warrior, not of the pundit, regarding the complex subtleties of life—seemed in this instance to be gifted with a vision denied to those around him. Verily the corner-stone of the edifice has no merit of its own to become the corner-stone, but because the builder chooses to make it so. Or perchance Moolraj did possess some merit of his own, if not in this life, in some past. Yet, again, it might have been but his own paternal love that was alike seeking some comfort in its bereavement and also clutching blindly at any miracle for its resurrection. For Moolraj had been deprived of his own son by an enemy.

One day he saw a trooper of the guard hasten to hand Barath his riding-whip, whereupon Moolraj lay in wait for the trooper, and catching him by the neck beat him with the flat of his sword. Then kneeling down at Barath's feet, he bowed his head till his beard was upon the ground.

"Myself will serve the Heaven-born," he murmured. He raised his head and gazed into Barath's eyes ; when he spoke again his voice was husky.

"For seventeen generations mine have served thine : on the field of battle and in the palace. So let me also. I have earned the right."

"So be it, O Moolraj," Barath answered. "When I am a man thou shalt serve me to the end of my days."

"And now, Heaven-born ?"

"And now also."

From that day Moolraj taught him all that a warrior

should know—even to the method of picking up a fallen sword at full gallop or transfixing a floating leaf with the point of a lance. When the anniversary of the day on which he had lost his son drew nigh, Moolraj served Barath with yet greater love.

Laying his head once more upon the ground he said, "Heaven-born, my sorrow is greater than I can bear. Give me back my son !"

"How can I ?" asked Barath wonderingly.

"Thou canst, if thou wilt !" Moolraj answered.

Barath marvelled. "I am but a child," he said, "and have no strength. How didst thou lose him ?"

"An enemy of our house stole him this day two years ago, when he was but twelve months old ; and I know not if he still lives. Heaven-born, let me plead with thee ! If I die, and there be no son of mine to perform my last obsequies, my soul shall have no rest. Give me back my little Girbur, Heaven-born !"

"If he be dead ?"

"Even if he be dead !"

"I do not understand thee, Moolraj ; I am but a child. Explain thyself."

"And I am only an ignorant soldier. But I have asked many pundits to tell me all the methods, earthly or even miraculous, of regaining a lost son. They give me no hope, saying that if a son be lost it must be due to his own karma of former lives. Yet there is *one* hope"—Moolraj's voice quivered with some vague emotion—"Krishna alone has power to mediate, to undo the effect of one's karma by his own saving grace. Heaven-born, let me clutch at this hope ?"

Barath was silent. Some new instinct was awaking within him, some new fire coursing through his veins.

"Tell me how Krishna saved," he asked. "I have not yet learnt it."

Moolraj, still on his knees and sitting on his heels, recited word by word the narrative he had heard from the pundits :—

"When the boy Krishna had been taught by his preceptor, he asked what fee he should pay for his instructions. But the preceptor, inwardly conscious that his pupil was not like unto other pupils, answered, 'Restore to me my only son drowned in the Ocean.'

"Krishna mounted his chariot and went to the Ocean. Ocean, taking human shape, rose up from the water and appeared before Krishna. 'Restore to me the son of my teacher,' Krishna commanded. 'It is not I who holds the child, but Yama,' Ocean answered in fear and trembling. Then Krishna descended into the lower regions, the kingdom of Yama, the God of the Dead, and commanded him to restore the son of his preceptor. 'How can that be, O Krishna?' Yama replied, making obeisance; 'the child is here through his own karma.' But Krishna answered, 'By my grace I absolve him from his karma. Restore him.' Thus the child, though dead, was restored to earth in the same incarnation."

Moolraj folded his hands upon his breast and gazed again into Barath's eyes. "Speak, Heaven-born; the servant of thy servants still hopes!"

"What sense is this creeping over me?" Barath answered in vague emotion. "What voice in my ear, whispering to me? . . . O Moolraj, I know not what all this means, but if it be possible thy son shall be given back to thee."

"Say it again, O Krishna!"—a cry of mingled terror

and joy broke from Moolraj's lips. "Say it again, Heaven-born—with thy hand upon my head!"

And Barath laid his right hand upon the head of Moolraj, and repeated the words. "Thy son shall be given back to thee, if it be possible."

So far the ruler of Barathpur had not deemed it expedient to impart to his son any regular instruction from books. He desired the child's mind to remain fallow for a time, so that its thirst for knowledge should be all the greater when the period of regular studies began. Meanwhile the child could receive the beginning of knowledge by ear alone. Vashista, the High Priest of Vishnu, spent an hour in his company, telling him stories from the ancient classics; and as the Sanskrit classics of India are permeated throughout with the religious and moral principles of the Hindu faith, the High Priest was indirectly imparting to the child the first lessons of his religion. And as these were supplemented in an equally pleasant form by means of stories from Hindu history picturesquely narrated by Delini, Barath's education had really progressed beyond the merely elementary stage before he knew a letter of the Sanskrit, or even Hindi, alphabet. Because what he heard in his ear was indelibly engraven upon his heart.

About this time a change seemed to come over his nature. He would sometimes retire to a little distance to be quite alone, and commune with his thoughts. Then suddenly he would stand quite still, gazing straight before him with glistening eyes, lips slightly apart. A smile of ecstasy, an inarticulate cry of rapture, a slight movement forward with arms out-

stretched—and the dream or vision would instantly vanish, and he would return to earth with a shock. And then the glistening of his eyes might have been through unshed tears.

His mother happened to notice him on an occasion like this. Her first impulse was to rush to him and gather him in her arms. But she checked herself—and waited. Waited many days for the mood to return, while secretly watching him. Then the day came, and softly she approached him from the back.

When the vision had ended, she sank on her knees and held him in her arms.

"Tell me, O joy of my life, what didst thou see or hear?"

"I know not quite, mother mine," Barath answered. "I saw bright things."

"Heart of my soul, tell me more? - Were they good things; did they make thee happy?"

"Happy, mother mine, but also sad. For I do not understand."

"Then tell me all, sweetest?" she pleaded.

"I saw bright forms passing before me in the air. They smiled to me, and whispered to me, telling me to do something I could not understand. And others sang to me all the time, holding out to me a garland of flowers. Then I started to go to them—but as I moved they floated back in the air and I could not see or hear them."

His mother began to understand. No, not to understand; her very love debarred her from that. But to perceive dimly according to the teachings of her faith that the child's karma was beginning to take

shape in the present life, and perchance to point to his destiny ; but in what manner she did not know.

Let there be any abnormal gift, attribute, or even passing phenomenon about her child—and the Hindu mother's heart is at once wrapt in fear. "Why didst thou make my child unlike any other child, O Brahma?" she would cry. Why not? The ways of Fate are strange, and from the child to whom much is given much more may be required. Which she dreads.

Barath's mother sought her husband. "Tell me, beloved, why is our son unlike other boys of his age? Why does he not love to make mud-pies like other boys? Even the son of a king might do that at his age."

And in response Barath's father sought the High Priest. Vashista, with fear and hope battling in his heart, came to the inner palace.

"Blessed be ye, the parents of the child Barath! Thrice blessed and thrice happy! The hope in my heart is too great for utterance, lest perchance it be yet made void by too early an utterance. But this I am permitted to say: rejoice and fear not. All shall be revealed when Vishnu decrees. There, I have spoken: *when Vishnu decrees!*"

The mother sank on her knees and clasped Barath to her heart, saying, "Whatever it be, he is still my child." She kissed him several times; but though she began with his face, she ended with his hand. For she took his right hand tenderly, yet reverently, and pressed her lips to it—whilst yet on her knees.

But Barath, moved by some strange impulse, went down on his knees likewise, and prostrated himself

before his mother. Laying his head at her feet, he said, "I worship thee, O Goddess! Thou art my mother, and the vicegerent of the Creator." This he said knowing not what he said. For the words formed themselves upon his lips.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD'S PAIN

THOUGH Barath's father did not fully realise the meaning of the High Priest's words, he had sufficient perception to understand implicitly that Fate had something special in store for his son. The traditions of his ancestors for thirty centuries had been military, and scarcely anything but military; hence any special destiny in a prince of that line could only have implied special success in the fortunes of war. Yet the few exceptions in the past had pointed to a diametrically opposite direction—to a special and even unprecedented success in the arts of peace: Vikra-maditya, the greatest of his ancestors, had been a friend and patron of poets; Sudraka a poet himself and India's first dramatist.

So the special destiny of his son, to be fulfilled in modern days, still remained undetermined. He sought out his counsellors of state.

"Make him taste of the joys of the earth," they advised. "Then his own natural inclinations—wherefore also the decree of his karma—will reveal themselves."

The High Priest of Vishnu heard of the advice, and approved. He had a deep reason: he desired that Barath's parents should even unconsciously cast his

early years in the same manner as the boyhood of Krishna. Krishna's boyhood had been full of wondrous signs of his future destiny, so much indeed that the biographer of Buddha attributed some of them to Buddha—though, forsooth, such signs and even incidents might well be common to all deliverers of mankind.

The High Priest of Vishnu rejoiced. If Barath's destiny was truly of the highest, his conduct also would be likewise.

Thus, in accordance with the advice of his counsellors, Barath's father ordered a series of perpetual festivities in the palace and the capital, though the child was but nine years old. Now in the ordinary course of events there are on an average at least two days of festival in a month in the Indian calendar, which, after the due religious observances, might be spent in any pleasant form the people might choose. Hence it were possible to fill up the intervening days with minor celebrations by privileged persons.

Barath was delighted with the merriment in the palace, especially with the celebrations in the *samgita-salla* (theatre) of the palace—scenes from the classic drama of India depicting episodes from the lives of heroes and demigods. Yet the events outside the palace, be it a ride he took over the fields of a morning or a walk through the city at nightfall, interested him no less. For his father gave orders that only privileged persons should come within sight of Barath, be they even jugglers, buffoons, or acrobats. He generally accompanied the boy in person, for he wished to ensure that none but the pleasantest sights should ever meet his gaze. And the people, taking the hint, always came in holiday attire and with holiday faces. Indeed they

would have done that gladly for the sake of Barath alone ; for all India loves a child, royal or peasant born.

“ Father, are the people always merry and happy ? ”

“ Yes, my son. In Barathpur, always. ”

“ Will they always be happy ? ”

“ Yes, as long as thou art my son. And afterwards, when thou dost sit upon thy father’s throne, they will be happier still. ”

“ In the cities beyond ? ”

“ In the cities beyond, throughout thy kingdom. ”

The boy was silent awhile. “ Yet, father, there are moments when I lie awake at night and hear other sounds in my ear ; distant sounds that come to me from the uttermost parts of the kingdom ; nay, sometimes they seem to come from the uttermost parts of the earth. ”

“ Oh, father, ” he cried in sudden anguish, though he knew not yet the meaning of pain, “ I do not wish to sit upon thy throne. I wish to be always thus. ”

“ My son, if I could see thee sit upon my throne my joy would be heaven itself. ”

“ And the people ? ”

“ Their joy would be likewise. ”

But Barath looked up wistfully again. “ Yet the midnight cry still rings in my ear. Oh, father, it is not like the sound of laughter ; it is as if the cry did hurt one to utter. ” For he knew not yet the meaning of sorrow and of tears.

His father clutched at his breath, murmuring, “ Time enough for that, O Fate ! . . . My son, think no more of the midnight cry. It hurts *me* to hear thee speak of it. ”

Barath meekly obeyed. Yet, though he never spoke

of it, he could not banish the thought altogether from his mind.

His mother noticed it. "Art tired of the merriment, dearest?" she asked. "Lo, I have not heard thee laugh for three whole days! Do the cares of state already sit heavy upon thy brow?" She smiled playfully, thinking thus to beguile him into lightness.

"Not that, mother mine," he answered. "Tell me, when do people cry though it hurts them here, inside?" He placed his little hand upon his heart, and looked up wistfully to her eyes.

Her smile faded instantly. "Oh, my son, why dost thou speak like this? Thou art still a child, not yet ten. Play about like other children—to the delight of thy mother's heart. Wilt thou not, my sweetest?"

His father also joined tacitly in the plea, and bought him toys and implements of sport of strange shapes and make, and of all nationalities. But Barath was not happy.

So where his father and mother had failed, Delini, his sister, undertook the task. "These are all stupid games," she said decidedly; "I can teach thee much better ones. And, brother mine, thou must not be so thoughtful and silent. It is really very silly of thee. Now I shall play with thee."

She took him to the garden of the inner palace. "See what I have done for thee. This flower-bed is mine; but that, more beautiful still, is thine. Thy name is upon it."

Barath looked, and saw tiny little rows of flowers of various colours just emerging from the ground, about six inches high.

"They spell thy name, B-a-r-a-t-h. Thou canst

not read and write yet, but I can. So I ordered the gardener to plant the seeds in the shape of thy name."

Barath looked at the flowers wonderingly. To see his name in print was a new delight. "Sister mine, teach me to write my name for myself? Thou art *so* clever! Shall I ever be as clever as thou?" He looked at her with a new admiration.

"Perhaps; perhaps much more. But see me write thy name."

She took a stick, a small bamboo, and wrote on the sand. Large Hindi characters, the letters detached. Then she ordered the gardener to fill a small can with fine sand.

"Now I shall write thy name with the pouring sand." She chose a part of the gravel path, and poured out the sand from the spout, moving the can all the while to form the letters—which were all attached in consecutive order as the sand was falling all the time in the spaces between. "They would be so attached if thou didst sign thy name with a pen," she explained wisely.

Barath laughed with joy, and clapped his hands. "Now let me do it," he cried. He noted the shapes of the letters, took the can and imitated Delini.

"That is not quite perfect," she said, examining the signature critically. "The letters are all wobbly and jumpy. Try again."

Barath tried several times, till his teacher was satisfied.

"Now come with me to the outer palace," he cried in sudden inspiration. "I must show this to all!"

She thought a moment. "Yes, I shall come. I am not yet thirteen, and need not veil for another year. But still I cannot go just like this." For in the inner

garden she had pulled back the veil of her *sari* to her shoulders, leaving the head quite bare.

She ran into the palace and came back in a few minutes. The face was still exposed, but the veil was laid gracefully half over the head, and pinned to the hair at the centre with a diamond star. "Now, escort me to the outer palace."

It was a proud moment in Barath's life. He took her right hand in his, and led her to the great courtyard before the marble staircase of the palace. The people paused to look; the guards at the staircase, the high officials and courtiers coming or departing, the populace at the gate, the grooms and mahouts exercising their charge.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" they whispered. "The children of the gods!" Fortunately, though accidentally, Barath happened to be wearing a diamond aigrette upon his little turban, and thus kept his sister in countenance.

An elephant entered the outer gate. Upon the silver howdah was a young man, but pale and of delicate frame. He dismounted and began to ascend the staircase. Half-way up he noticed the children at the top. Pausing, he looked at them a moment, drew his sword, raised it aloft, and kissed the hilt. Had Delini not been there, he would have saluted with his hand alone. But the presence of a lady, even though a tiny lady, demanded that he should offer the fullest homage.

Barath returned the salute with the dignity of a prince. The young man passed by with but a seeming glance at Delini—a glance of deep respect—but there was a tumult at his heart

"Who is he?" Barath asked.

"Pertab of Pertabpur, our neighbour," Delini

answered, with downcast eyes. "He is not in good health, and goes to Simla *pahar* for a change. He comes to seek father's advice on affairs of state during his absence ; for he is a good man, loving and loved by his subjects. So mother tells me." Then, to disguise her thoughts, she added brightly, "But now to our play."

In the courtyard Barath called to Moolraj. "Moolraj, play with us. Teach us something new."

Moolraj knelt down before Barath. "Heaven-born, what shall it be ?"—and glancing at Delini—"Anything the Shri Kumari also wishes."

"Show us the black dust that makes a flash and a puff ?" Barath asked.

Moolraj beckoned to a trooper, who went in and brought out several little canvas bags, each containing a *seer* (2 lbs.) of gunpowder. Moolraj made a heap of one on the flagstones at a distance, and fired into the heap with a revolver at three paces. The powder flashed up with a puff, and the smoke curled up and up in a beautiful wreath.

Barath clasped his hands in joy, revelling in the smell. But Delini turned away her head and put her fingers to her nose. "Ugh ! What a horrid smell !" she said—but just to please her brother she turned back and smiled.

"Do it again, Moolraj," Barath cried in glee. For now he had become a child again—just like any other boy, as his mother would have delighted to see.

Moolraj now poured out a bagful in long snaky lines, and fired. The flash passed along the lines with a weird effect, just repeating the lines in fire and smoke. Thus, for Barath's sake, Moolraj made himself like unto a boy,

and jumped and skipped and danced round the gunpowder.

"Let me now do it?" Barath asked. Being unaccustomed to a revolver, he fired too soon, and singed Moolraj's eyebrows. But Moolraj was less concerned about that than about a little heating of Barath's hand from the flash.

Then a new inspiration came to the boy. "Let me sign my name," he cried. "Put this black dust in a can, so that I may write; plenty of it."

Moolraj did not quite understand, but did as bidden. Barath wrote.

"Is that right?" he asked Delini.

"Beautiful!" she answered, smiling. "A scribe could not have done it better." For the letters were joined together by a thin line in each intervening space, just as in a signature.

Barath fired at the first letter, and to his wonder the powder blazed up and began signing his name in red letters; and a moment after, when the smoke had cleared, he saw his name burnt deep upon the flagstones.

"So some day thy name shall flash before the world—in letters of fire."

He quickly turned at the words, and saw the High Priest standing behind him.

"Only for a moment, Holy One!" Barath answered. "Only for a brief instant!" For a dim perception came to him, boy though he was, that the words implied more than they seemed.

"And *being carved upon stones, shall last for ever!*" the High Priest added.

Barath followed his gaze, and saw the letters burnt

deep indeed upon the flagstones—but was too humble of heart to see them inscribed upon pillars and corner-stones.

Hearing of the incident, Barath's father rejoiced inwardly. There is yet hope for the Hindu if he be a father : the most abandoned sinner may become a saint within the hour, if he be a father. It is ever his aim to see his son greater than himself ; and if on his death-bed he sees him but his equal, with no promise of future greatness, he deems his own life to have been a failure, and dies in shame.

Thus the ruler of Barathpur sought to make his son a ruler greater than himself. How could he prepare him to that end ? Perhaps by showing him the kingdom in its happiest and most prosperous aspect, in laughter and in merriment—whilst hiding the sorrow and the tears—and thus perchance instructing him gradually how to keep the present happiness and to increase it in the future.

So he took Barath now to see the prosperity of the kingdom, to see it rippling with joy and laughter. First the plough-lands where the cattle dragged the plough over the rich red loam, and the timely rain fertilised it and yielded a double or triple crop. Then the mango groves where the birds of brilliant plumage dwelt : mynas and cockatoos, peacocks and parrots—and the butterflies, more varied in colour and more beautiful than the works of man, flitting across the green in the sunlight, and at night the glow-worms that sparkled with intermittent light, filling the groves with a soft radiance unseen save in a palace of fairies. The avenues of palm and champak flanked by rippling pools and rivulets, and dotted with luxuriant bushes of

jasmine, roses, and lilies. And the villages where shy young maidens came with pitchers balanced upon their heads to the ancient well outside beneath the venerable peepul-tree, and there, casting reserve to the winds, laughed and chatted and gossiped—and discussed the joys of a coming wedding. And the thronged cities where gay young cavaliers went by, prancing their steeds to show off their horsemanship, and beautiful maidens in gorgeous palanquins made a feast of colours and a scene of perpetual joy.

But going out on a ride to the fields of a morning without his father, who could not come because of affairs of state, Barath urged his pony to a mad gallop in a moment of glee, playing hide-and-seek among thickets and groves, and thus momentarily escaping the vigilance of his escort. Moolraj lost sight of him for awhile, though his laughter was still ringing in his ear. For in a mood of childish sport Barath had hidden behind a bush, doubled on his track, and gone off at a tangent sideways.

Beyond the intervening space, a few hundred yards ahead, were a number of other bushes. Barath rode straight for them.

Suddenly he noticed a white-clad form sitting under a tree beside the bush ; sitting, or rather doubled-up in a heap. At the sound of footsteps it arose—and all that Barath could see was a white shroud enveloping the figure from head to foot, with holes cut in the cloth for eyes.

Emerging from the bush it cast itself in the dust ten paces away. Knocking its head thrice on the ground, it cried :—

“ Death or cure ! Give me death or cure ! ”

Barath dismounted. "Who art thou?" he asked, going towards the figure.

"Unclean! Unclean! Come no nearer!" it cried in terror.

"I do not understand. Show thy face."

"*At thy command!*" It raised up its head, drew up the cloak, and turned what might have been its eyes towards the child. But I shall not describe the face. For it was scarred and disfigured, and eaten up to the bone. The face of a leper.

A leper in that last stage when the release from his pains is at hand, wherefore when the disfigurement is at the greatest.

"What art thou?" Barath asked. "Art thou a man, a human?"

"A human. As a child I was the joy of my mother's heart."

"Even as I am?"

The leper was silent. . . .

Then Moolraj rode up furiously, flung himself off his horse, and rushed to the child.

"Veil! Veil, thou unclean wretch!" he shouted to the leper. Forbidden to dwell within human sight, and fated to spend his last days in the jungle, to show his face unveiled was a crime unpardonable.

Barath interposed. "Stay, do not rebuke him!"

The world was swimming before him. He stood there motionless, his eyelids drooping, his lips slightly parted. The scales fell from his eyes, and the gigantic conspiracy of love that had wrapped him up in silks and pearls, and had surrounded him with joy and laughter, was shattered to the ground—the conspiracy of love that had veiled from him all sorrow and pain,

and had hidden from him the wail of the earth, the cry of the stricken, the cry of the hopeless. The veil was drawn, and the world stood naked before him.

He spoke to the leper. "And thou wert once even as I am? As I am now—the pride of my mother's heart? Now I understand the meaning of the midnight cry! I thank thee, my brother! Sightless thou art, but thou hast opened my eyes. I see where I did not see before. And I hear what I did not hear before. I thank thee again, my brother!"

Turning to depart, he added, "Peace be with thee! Thy release is at hand: the penance is sufficient for the sin. In a new incarnation find thy comfort."

In silence Barath returned to the palace, and Moolraj could find no word to speak.

CHAPTER V

DELINI'S FAREWELL

IN due time, when Barath was ten years old, it was resolved to begin his education systematically, from books. His father held a council to determine upon a choice of teacher. There were many pundits in Barathpur, learned in Sanskrit lore, some in the modern sciences : Viswa-mitra alone in both. But he was a recluse. It would be almost unprecedented if at the age of sixty he came forth from his life of contemplation to undertake the education of a child, albeit a royal child.

But when the proposal was made to him he received it with a joy undreamt of in his philosophy. He had been called Viswa-mitra after the ancient sage of that name because of his great knowledge and yet greater wisdom. He remembered that the ancient sage had been the tutor of a royal child who had regenerated a third of the human race ; ¹ yet that Prince had been but the successor of Krishna, and all that was attributed to him by his disciples had happened centuries before to Krishna himself. What wondrous sign was this ? Would he, another Viswa-mitra, be the teacher of Barath, another—— His lips tried to form the word, but in terror desisted.

Viswa-mitra accepted the sign. He would be Barath's

¹ Buddha.

teacher ; nay, more—he would humbly endeavour to follow in the footsteps of the other Viswa-mitra, wherefore in the footsteps of Krishna's teacher. In word and deed, at every stage.

On an auspicious day he sat in the *andar-mahal* of the palace with a sheaf of palm-leaves before him, a pot of ink and a reed pen beside him. Barath came and made due obeisance.

“*Shri, Shri Sarasati !* In the name of Sarasati, who presides over all learning,” the teacher said. “Begin always thus ; and do not forget the double *Shri*. Once for a mortal, even a king or queen, prince or princess, but twice for an immortal. Child, write after me the alphabet, first in Sanskrit, then in Hindi.”

“Master, I write,” Barath obediently replied.

“Now to the science of numbers which the learned call mathematics,” Viswa-mitra continued, “the beginning and end of all things : the beginning of all knowledge, and the end of all science. Child, even thus I began and ended.”

True : Viswa-mitra would have been the Senior Wrangler of his year at Cambridge, had he not refused to specialise, preferring a versatile attainment in the arts and sciences in general even to the highest honour in the highest science.

“Let us begin with numbers.” He took Barath through the digits, then their combinations in centuries, thousands, millions, multiples of millions. “Now the numbers of ocean-drops, grains of sand, and the stars in the heavens—and their name is *ashanka*, which is legion upon legion, till each legion is but a drop. Last comes *kalpa*, which is the number of years in which the whole universe will work out its salvation, and every

created being will attain perfection and return to the bosom of its Creator in *nirvana*—and the cycle of creation and return to the Creator will begin anew. Wouldst know more? Then there remains the *mahakalpa*, which is the sum-total of all the *kalpas* intended by the Creator, that is, the time of the Creator's existence—which is eternity itself."

Then Viswa-mitra mentioned the marvels of science described in the old Sanskrit books: how Brahma just created out of his breath the original nebula from which the world was moulded, but Vishnu, the second person of the Godhead, completed the creation in eight manifestations—which have a strange resemblance to the basic principle of the modern European theory of Evolution; that man being now created, Vishnu took human shape as Rama for his ninth work to glorify man, and as Krishna for his tenth avatar to redeem fallen man.

Viswa-mitra also narrated the anticipations of Western Science in the *Mahabharata*, that wonderful storehouse of knowledge comprising an epic poem and an encyclopedia of treatises on the arts and sciences, written by Hindu sages, poets, seers, centuries before civilisation dawned on Europe. Nay, how some of these anticipations of science had been fulfilled in recent years, were being fulfilled, or yet remained to be fulfilled, even aerial navigation. For thus it is chronicled in the *Mahabharata*: "Krishna's enemies sought the aid of the demons who built an aerial chariot with sides of iron and clad with wings (that is, aeroplanes). The chariot was driven through the sky till it stood over Dwaraka in which Krishna's followers dwelt, and from there it hurled down upon the city

missiles that destroyed everything on which they fell. . . .”

Thus Barath began the study of mathematics, and was fascinated by it. There was a method in the mode of education selected for him. Having been kept fallow till ten, he was so keen on his sole study, mathematics, that at the age of eleven he had mastered the first four books of Euclid. Then just as he was feeling his powers and realising that the four books had put into his hands a splendid weapon with which he might conquer a new world, he was forbidden to touch a book on any branch of mathematics, and was taken away to other regions. And the result? This : in his leisure moments, armed with a piece of charcoal or chalk, he would lie on the floor of his study drawing strange figures and lines and curves upon the cold marble.

One day he was so absorbed in this recreation that his tutor entered and stood behind him, unnoticed.

Viswa-mitra saw and noted before speaking.

“ Child, what are these ? ”

Barath sprang up in confusion, yet spoke in joyous glee.

“ See, master, see ! ” he exclaimed excitedly. “ The venerable sage Euclid has mentioned all three cases of equal triangles, but I vaguely felt that there might be a fourth case of which he does not speak. But I am puzzled : sometimes I get it, and sometimes I don't. See, master—here it is correct, here not. Why ? ” And he looked down at the figures in mingled joy and disappointment.

“ The venerable sage indeed omitted to mention that,” Viswa-mitra answered gravely. “ But it is

known in modern science : it is called the ' Ambiguous Case ' in trigonometry. Being ambiguous, a correct solution is not always possible. But, child, this subject properly belongs to thy College days in the future."

Barath hung his head guiltily.

And all the time a fire was raging in Viswa-mitra's heart. He felt he could have sunk on his knees and laid his head at Barath's feet, saying, " O wondrous child, thou art the teacher of thy teachers ! " Instead his duty only allowed him to say, " But meanwhile thou art permitted to *think* of these things—when the Spirit moves thee. Now come and play."

With tears in his eyes Viswa-mitra went to Barath's father.

" Thou hast in him a pearl beyond all price. But he is only twelve ; so for the next three years let his book lessons be few, and his games many. Give him new sports, new scenes, new interests."

Thus it was ordained. . . .

The first relaxation came with the preparations for Delini's approaching marriage. She was over fifteen, and as the preliminaries would occupy a few months she would be almost sixteen at the time of the actual wedding. An offer for her hand had come from Pertab, the young ruler of Pertabpur. True romance is not absent from India, tales of Christian missionaries notwithstanding. On the contrary, India was its original birth-place, and is now the heart of its home. For in India they never love except at first sight. And the very knowledge that Fate had afforded them the opportunity of that first sight—wherefore, had intended them for each other—knits their hearts together.

There are no happier marriages in the world than in India. If the sight be but once, the previous information about each other is plentiful enough. Delini knew Pertab's reputation and all his public acts. As for his private deeds, she accepted them on trust—exactly in the same manner as if she had been in Europe, and he had come to her drawing-room on his best behaviour to sip tea, talk gossip and every little tittle-tattle.

During the preparations Pertab had to come often to Barathpur and be entertained; and though he could not see Delini, Delini could see him. But his mother came on a visit to Rani Koikai and the bride; in return Koikai went to Pertabpur and saw Pertab himself and his mother. Meanwhile the usual *ghataks* (matrimonial agents) were at work to make or break off the match—so that had there been one small bone of a skeleton in either household, it would have been dragged out and set up and magnified. Which may be a trying ordeal—if you really have anything to hide. In any case the skeleton, if there be one, comes out before marriage, not after.

Realising that Barath and Delini were to be parted for many years to come, perchance for ever, their parents arranged that Barath should have no further studies in the days preceding his sister's marriage, but spend all his time in her society.

"What is love?" Barath timidly asked of her.

Delini blushed. "What a strange boy thou art!" she lightly said, to hide her confusion. "Thou must wait at least six, eight, or ten years for that."

"But what is love?" he persisted.

She was silent a moment. "It is an intense bliss in the very thought of the loved one," she answered softly.

"Nothing more?" He was disappointed.

"Yes!" she said earnestly. "A yearning to make him happy all the days of his life."

"Then if I wish to make my little pony happy, or the big monkey in the *jadu-khana* (menagerie) at the back of the palace, or the funny dog that tumbles over its head—do I love it?"

Delini was puzzled, and merely looked at him. She was scarcely more than a child herself, and no philosopher.

"Or even the leper that spoke to me," he asked wistfully, "and other people also?"

Delini, the bride, smothered a sob. "Barath, Barath, why dost thou speak like that?" She entwined her arms around his neck, but knew not whether to laugh or to cry. "Thou canst not love the leper?"

"Yes, sister mine, I can." His eyes were closed, his lips slightly parted. "Sometimes I have that yearning within me, the yearning to make the leper happy, and all other people of the earth." His lips quivered. "Even if I suffer pain to do it."

With scared face she gazed at him, then burst into tears. "Oh, Barath, thou dost not know what thou sayest. If my husband were to die the very day after the bridal, or twenty years after, I would mount the funeral pyre with him and die—to save his soul from pain. Gladly, because I love him."

"And he? What would he do for thee?"

"All that man can do for woman!" she answered proudly, drying her tears. "Even like Prithiraj he

would yield up his throne, his life, his destiny for my sake—if necessary ! ” . . .

After the bridal, when the gorgeous cavalcade was formed and she was about to be borne away in the palanquin, she bade farewell to her parents. The torch-light procession, a mile long, was already formed. Gold-tusked elephants and silver trumpeters ; bands of musicians with conches, zithers, and mandolines ; troops of irregular cavalry with pennoned lances and glittering tulwars, men-at-arms in chain-mail and visors of steel ; groups of laughing boys with squibs and crackers ; a score of athletes whirling six-foot sticks, torched at each end, in circles of fire. Big men and small men, old men and young boys, dulcet music and fizzing squibs—all stood ready to escort her to her new home.

She turned to Barath, a vague premonition tugging at her heartstrings.

“ Farewell, my brother—no, not farewell, for surely I shall see thee again. Seek some little sister to take my place, some one younger than thee, so that thy love be all the greater ; some one sweeter and more beautiful than I. And as she will be only thy sister in name, she might yet be something more.” But in that very thought a sob rose to her lips.

Then suddenly, laughing amid her tears, she whispered lightly, “ In ten years I shall return—and find a most beautiful wife for thee, more beautiful than the full moon. Now thank me with a last kiss.”

Then breaking away from him, she mounted the dais borne on the shoulders of sixteen stalwart men, four to each pole. Upon the dais, beneath the canopy of gold and crimson, she sat upon the bridal throne in

robes of royal *kincob*. As the procession was emerging beyond the outer gate she raised her triple veil, smiled at her parents, and bringing the fringe of the veil to her lips waved it lightly to Barath.

Then she passed away beyond their gaze.

CHAPTER VI

THE HUNTING OF THE TIGER

THE dowager Rani, Koikai's mother, had come to Barathpur on the occasion of her granddaughter's marriage; but owing to her age she remained within the innermost palace, and gave her blessing there to the bride.

Afterwards Koikai led Barath to her. Placing her right hand upon his head, she said to her mother, "Five more spans have I woven into this cloth-of-gold. Say, mother mine, have I woven them well?"

Her mother took the boy on her lap and gazed into his eyes. "Thou hast woven them well," she said. "Yet I see that the cotton still remains with the gold. Take it away altogether."

Koikai went down on her knees, and kissing her son's right hand, answered softly, "Both were in the design." By that she meant the eternal design that shaped the boy's destiny.

Her mother started. To her the ideal warrior was the ideal man, and war the only gold in his make: the arts of peace but cotton. Born of India's demigods, she still lived in the atmosphere of the *Mahabharata* which had enunciated the noblest idealism in the pursuit of war. What is the international law of Europe, the St. Petersburg Convention and the Geneva Conven-

tion ? A distant echo of the *Mahabharata* diluted with the frailties of man.

Brought up in such chivalrous traditions, Koikai's mother had taken no stock of the lapse of years. To her war was still the one noble theme in a man's life.

She held Barath in her arms and asked him, "What wilt thou be, O heart of my heart, what wilt thou be ? A warrior or a pundit ?"

He answered her, "Whatsoever be my destiny." Then he added humbly, "Let it be a warrior—if it pleases thee."

"How can that be ?" Koikai asked in tribulation. "The wars of to-day are not of that kind. And I would not that my son were a warrior in any other."

True indeed ; the only war to-day like unto the wars of old in which the Princes of India may participate is the war against the wild beasts of the jungle that do harm to peaceful men. Here, even though the foe be a wild beast, the laws of chivalry may prevail. Why ? Because, unlike a human foe, the beast, though savage, is incapable of treachery : for you know, or should know, that it is not properly dead till the skin is hanging in your tent. The average English sportsman, after chasing foxes and shooting pigeons, may have the luck to go to India for a winter's tiger-hunting as the guest of a Rajah. Then he learns what true sport is—notwithstanding his supercilious ridicule of the Frenchman in sport. For if he hunts the tiger nine times he at least takes the risk of being hunted by the tiger once—which is generally sufficient to balance the debt of sportsmanship between the man and the tiger. For the tiger, being of the cat tribe, has nine lives, the man one. But of that in due course.

Koikai's mother was not to be denied.

"Alas! too true," she answered, realising suddenly the lapse of time from the days of her dreams. "The wars of to-day are indeed different. But give him what little remains—the poor substitute. All that a prince and a warrior might have. . . . Yes, my sight is failing, my daughter. I am getting old and feeble." She gazed at Barath at arm's length, and her visions of heroism faded. "I see him—not quite—not quite what I—hoped. . . . But it was so written. So be it." She bowed her head.

So it happened that Barath's father took him to the field of sport. Seven Englishmen had come to visit him, most of them old friends eminent in the service of the Imperial Government, a few new. While they were being entertained in the palace, shikaris were employed to scour the nearest jungles and note the biggest tigers therein—which were kept quiet, pending the elaborate preparations, by the simple expedient of tying up a sheep here, a goat there, or even a bullock, by the nearest watercourse, so that the tigers could eat and drink merrily for a week.

Meanwhile the preparations were completed. A jungle, a mile square and containing half a dozen tigers, was encircled on three sides by several hundred beaters and a hundred siege elephants. They gradually narrowed down the circle, driving the denizens before them with a hideous din of shouts, yells, tom-toms, squibs and crackers: purposely hideous, for they were paid to make the most horrible noises they could devise with earthly or unearthly aid. The denizens ran out on the fourth side, the timid blue deer first; the tigers last, being the most stubborn.

But the fourth side was a ravine a mile long, beyond which the hunters were stationed in a crescent on twenty fine-tusked elephants, two hunters on each elephant, each hunter with an explosive bullet in his rifle. They would let the minor animals pass, and begin firing only when the tigers emerged.

Barath's father was among the hunters, the seven Englishmen allotted along the crescent at points of vantage. Barath earnestly begged to be allowed to come.

"My son, it is much too dangerous," his father answered. "Even seasoned hunters are not safe. But come to the encampment, and I shall bring the skins to thee and narrate the killing."

And the encampment was five miles away from the ravine! Barath was sad and disappointed.

"Wait, Heaven-born," Moolraj whispered to him. "All the tigers could not be killed on the first day. Wait!" . . .

And at the front? Days and weeks of preparation—and the encounter with each tiger was over in a few seconds. It could not be otherwise. When man and tiger meet in this fashion, one of three things could happen within the few seconds: the tiger is killed outright by a shower of explosive bullets—in reality small shells; or the tiger has escaped between the gaps in the line of elephants by a magnificent charge; or the hunted has turned hunter—in which case, also, the tiger-hunt is over in the few seconds, for now the man-hunt has begun.

So the cardinal principle of tiger-hunting was duly impressed upon the minds of the novices among the seven Englishmen—namely, that the two hunters on an

elephant must never fire simultaneously ; one must reserve his fire for an emergency, till the other has reloaded.

At the actual killing three of the tigers were disposed of outright : they successively emerged from the bed of the ravine and were under fire for seventy yards, so that each in turn was torn up by a dozen explosive balls before it could come within striking distance. But elephants are restless creatures and cannot stand still ; they must advance or recede, or shift sideways—which in this case was impossible, as the due amount of turning space had to be preserved, lest perchance in a moment of panic a huge Camperdown should accidentally gore a huger Victoria. So at each successful killing of a tiger the elephants unconsciously advanced a few steps.

Then suddenly the bushes, not at the bed of the ravine, but at the slope, parted ; thirty yards from the elephants. A tiger and a tigress stood there, both of splendid proportions.

They stood in all their glory ; surprised at the unexpected presence of their enemies, yet defiant, majestic, scorning their assassins. In reality all that pose lasted but a second ; for in that time the tiger had drawn up his limbs to their utmost tension ; and in that same second the explosive ball from the nearest elephant had entered his shoulder and emerged through the back without exploding ; and nineteen other balls had followed in a random shower. In that brief moment the tigress escaped, leaping to the side and vanishing beneath the lee of the elephants.

And in that self-same second the wounded tiger leaped. He saw but the first firer, his nearest mark.

The thirty yards he covered in two bounds and then a leap of fury. It seemed but a flash of yellow that rose up from the ground and fastened itself upon the elephant's head.

Maddened with pain, the elephant rocked, flinging off the mahout to the ground. The two English hunters clutched at the howdah to keep their balance. The hunters on the other elephants looked on helplessly, for the whole episode since the tiger's appearance out of the ravine had lasted but five seconds. Then some one pointed a rifle.

"Stop! Don't fire!" the Maharajah called out sternly. "You might kill the men!"

For the frantic elephant was rolling, heaving, rearing, bucking, to throw off the terrible foe upon its head. And the young Englishman who had wounded the tiger gazed in fascination at the flaming eyes not a yard away, unable to release his hold of the howdah to reload, his companion to fire. Had the elephant's girth-ropes burst, the two Englishmen would have been torn to death the instant after.

But the ropes held by the decree of Fate, and the elephant, regaining its man-like intelligence, temporarily lost in the sudden panic, curled its trunk round to the tiger's throat, seeking to tear it off bodily from its head. Then the tiger waited no more: it dropped to the ground, shot past the rear of the elephant, cleared the arena with a single bound, and vanished into the bushes beyond, followed by an erratic hail of twenty bullets.

Yet every firer inwardly prayed that his aim would fail; for so magnificent an onslaught in the face of overwhelming odds should indeed ensure the tiger the

immunity of its life for the moment. Afterwards it might be followed to its lair and a new battle waged—with the most punctilious regard for the St. Petersburg Convention.

Meanwhile let us turn to Barath at the encampment. Close by there was a prosperous village. He directed his pony towards it to make its acquaintance. A number of naked little boys were playing about the outskirts in supposed charge of a herd of bull buffaloes.

The near side of the village was occupied by agriculturists, the other by artisans—weavers of beautiful shawls, and artificers in metal, brass, copper, silver, gold. Beyond the village there were a few small mansions, one occupied by a retired *sonar* (banker), and another by the immediate landlord of the village. The latter's son, Madhava, a youth of eighteen, and the most brilliant student of his year at Bombay University, was home for the long vacation. He came out for a stroll through the village, passed the busy workers and the gossiping idlers, and came to the pool at the outskirts where the bull buffaloes were wallowing.

Madhava saw Barath from a distance, salaamed profoundly, then passed on to the little boys tumbling in the mud beside the bull buffaloes. In a village there is always a sort of head herdsman, but the actual work of taking out the buffaloes to graze, to wallow, and then fetching them back at night, is done by little boys; little boys, because they are useless for any other work and can play about all day in the same mud as the buffaloes. And, wonderful result, just because the buffaloes see the boys sharing the same wallow, a bond of affection arises between the two.

There is no love on earth between different species equal to the love of the buffalo for the little boy that tends it. The deep attachment for man shown by such intelligent animals as the elephant, the dog, the horse, is far surpassed by that poor, dull, stupid creature, the buffalo. Woe to the sneaking tiger that comes to steal the boy: the whole herd will turn instantly, charge the tiger and trample it to a pulp; and if there be but a single bull it will face the tiger—while the boy finds shelter between its legs—and in dying will refuse to die till it has also killed its killer, to ensure the safety of the child.

And in daily life the buffalo will allow the boy to bully it, to twist its tail—and love the sport. But woe to the man of strange garb and mien—an European will suffice—who comes too suddenly within sight. For the buffalo is suspicious and has no brains—and would not recognise the Viceroy himself. Instead it would hurl its body—ten feet long without the tail, and six feet high—at His Excellency in mad fury. Of that more anon.

The boys saw Madhava, and yelled out in a chorus, “*Ohé, Madhava-jee*,¹ what news of the hunt?”

“Great news, little brothers,” Madhava answered affectionately. “The bulls are wanted for a wounded tiger. I heard so in the village.”

An instant transformation occurred. The boys tumbled out of the mud and shouted to the buffaloes. The huge lumbering creatures clambered out of the wallow, and each naked little boy seized a buffalo’s tail and ran up its back like a squirrel.

¹ The suffix *jee* is always added in popular speech in addressing a superior. It is equivalent to the English “sir.”

"I am the leader—I am the herdsman's son," exclaimed one, urging his animal to the front.

"No, only the adopted son," objected another. "And the adoption is not yet completed. Is it not so, *vakil-jee*?" he appealed to Madhava.

Madhava was not yet a qualified *vakil* (advocate), but merely a law student. Hence he was all the more anxious to adjudicate learnedly.

"It is so," he answered. "The ratification will be next moon. Till then Gulab may lead only if the herdsman agrees. But he can appeal to a higher Court." This he added with a mischievous smile, knowing that the boys could not understand him.

Gulab did not understand, but his indignation sufficed. He saw Barath watching them from the top of a mound fifty yards away, jumped off the buffalo, and ran to the mound.

"Kumar Sahib," he said, making obeisance, "I appeal to thee."

Barath was intensely amused. "How old art thou?" he asked Gulab.

"Seven," the naked little urchin answered solemnly.

"And I, though twelve, am not allowed to go to the hunt on an elephant. Then how canst thou go on a buffalo?" By that Barath meant the perilous nature of the work required of the buffaloes.

The matter was summarily ended by the arrival of an excited group of villagers, headed by the herdsman. Gulab pleaded to be allowed to go, but the herdsman thrust him aside, saying, "Be off to the house! This is no work for babes!"

The herdsman took charge of the buffaloes and urged them quickly towards the jungle.

Gulab, left behind, stood still in mortification, humiliation. He felt a lump in his throat, and put up his hands to hide his face.

Barath comforted him. "Do not weep, little brother. Thy day may yet come. See, I too am waiting for mine !"

CHAPTER VII

THE JUDGMENT OF KRISHNA

THE tiger wounded at the hunt was traced by its blood to a dense thicket two miles away. It was necessary to oust it from its lair and kill it.

Of the various perils of the world some are distinctly greater than others. For instance, in India at least, a jealous wife is considered to be a serious peril; for, as it is, the wife really rules, not the husband. But worse than the peril of a jealous wife is the peril of a mad dog; and worse than a mad dog is an elephant in *musth*. But worse than the elephant, the mad dog, the jealous wife combined is a wounded tiger.

The ordinary tiger-hunt with elephants is dangerous enough. Explosive bullets are permitted by the ethics of hunting in sheer justice to the hunter. Otherwise the hunter must surely die in nine cases out of ten; for even if the tiger be shot through the heart or the brain by a dozen solid balls—wherefore theoretically dead—it will still leap upon the elephant and kill its killer.

The peril of ousting a wounded tiger from its lair is far greater; it is certain death to any man that attempts it, and if a number of men, to one or more of them. Elephants are useless, unless brought right up to the lair—when the tiger is able to leap up to the

howdah. A battery of field-guns could be brought up, and the tiger shelled at three thousand yards. But that is not permitted by the ethics of sport.

The only alternative is a herd of bull buffaloes—and in that there is true poetic justice. Centuries before the advent of man on this planet the buffalo roamed in individual freedom on the banks of the Ganges—and was eaten by the tiger. Had the tiger dared to attack it in front, the buffalo would soon have gored or trampled it to death. But the buffalo had to feed long to satisfy its hunger, and with its head to the grass; so the tiger always took it from the rear. At last, exasperated and almost exterminated, out of sorrow was begotten wisdom. The buffaloes realised that if they could always present a united front to the tiger they would be safe. So they combined and formed a herd—grazing together, moving together, drinking together, horn to horn, in a phalanx or circle or square. Wisdom is begotten of sorrow also among men; the working-men of Europe learnt the power of co-operation only after centuries of oppression from their task-masters.

And now in the service of man the buffaloes delight to hunt the tiger. Perhaps it is the dim memory of the centuries of suffering before they united, and the old scores yet to be paid, the vengeance yet due. Be that as it may, seeing the tiger or sniffing it their hearts are turned to rage.

So the herd of bull buffaloes was requisitioned to oust the wounded tiger. The seven Englishmen desired to account for this tiger themselves. The Maharajah laughed and consented—but warned them to keep out of sight of the buffaloes.

The shikari in charge of the operations placed the Englishmen in a semi-circle on the far side of the lair, each on a tree ; three at fifty yards, four at a hundred. Then the herdsman brought up the buffaloes on the near side, and formed them in line. Already they had sniffed the tiger, and with arched backs and levelled horns were pawing the ground impatiently. The shikari gave the word, and with a sharp snort of battle they thundered into the thicket, trampling it, cutting it into lanes.

A snarl, a roar—and the tiger leaped out on the far side, snarled again in rage—then a sharp volley from the three hunters above ripped open its side. In blind fury the tiger turned towards the trees with a terrific roar, shot past them, turned, gathered itself for its dying leap. That instant another volley rang out, this time from the four hunters behind—and the explosive balls tore up the tiger's body at that close range, even as it was in the act of leaping. And the tiger, though dead, still leaped spasmodically, turned a somersault in the air, came down with a thud, rolled over and over with its own impetus, then lay still.

The Englishmen were climbing down joyfully.

"Up, Sahibs! Up for your lives!" the shikari shouted.

At first they did not understand ; then remembering their host's advice, they went up again. For the buffaloes were charging right up, and would satisfy themselves that the tiger was really dead. Then the herdsman induced them to depart, and rewarded them forthwith by taking them to the nearest wallow.

The Englishmen came down, and had tiffin in a tent close by. After the meal they gave their guns to the

servants to carry, lighted their cheroots, and strolled out. The servants cleared away the tent and returned in due course, and meanwhile the shikari and the herdsman had returned to the village. But even by tea-time, an hour before sundown, the Englishmen had not returned.

"Father, I shall go and fetch the herd home," Gulab said to the herdsman, desiring to make up in some way for his forced inactivity.

And in the palace the non-arrival of the Englishmen was noticed, though indeed there was no reason why they should not continue their stroll till dinner.

"Come with me," Barath said to Moolraj. "I want to ride till sunset."

So Moolraj mounted his horse and accompanied Barath to the fields. The village also was astir, and the searchers directed their attention towards the farther jungle which had been the scene of the tiger-hunt.

But Gulab went to the wallow, a couple of miles from the village, where the buffaloes were. To his astonishment he did not see them. He went in knee-deep into the mud, shouted, whistled, used all the buffalo-calls he knew. No answer. He scrambled out and hastened towards the beginning of the little forest of sal and peepul where the Englishmen had taken tiffin.

Meanwhile Barath and Moolraj rode across the fields, chatting about the hunt. After awhile they saw a group of trees half a mile ahead and rode leisurely towards it. Coming a little nearer they casually noticed some sort of movement going on beneath the trees. At five hundred yards they discovered that it was due to the herd of buffaloes: they seemed to be in a state of excitement, pawing the ground, tossing

their heads, and snorting. Barath and Moolraj broke into a gallop.

But Gulab was there already. He ran into the buffaloes from the side, yelling and gesticulating wildly.

"Down, Buldeo! Down, Chundoo!" he shrieked. "Down, ye sons of pigs!"

He rushed to Buldeo, the biggest bull, who was snorting with fury treeward, and thwacked him with his tiny hands.

Barath and Moolraj glanced upwards. Yes, in the trees were the Englishmen. The situation was obvious: they had strolled past the herd in the wallow, and had carelessly come too near. Already excited by the tiger, and always suspicious, the buffaloes had come out and charged. The Englishmen had taken to the trees, and were waiting for rescue at the hands of the naked little urchin who would come to fetch the herd.

"Down, I said!" Gulab yelled again. "Down, ye sons of an owl! Know not these are the great Sahib-log?" He ran from buffalo to buffalo, thwacking each on the jaw—which to the mighty creatures was as a kiss. Yet the huge lumbering beasts that had charged the wounded tiger, blinked, pawed the ground, then came down on their haunches. Gulab ran up Buldeo's back like a squirrel, and seated himself on the neck.

"Now rise," he shouted imperiously. "Turn!"

And the herd meekly turned.

"Salaam, Sahibs," Gulab called over his shoulder. "My beasts were very stupid and did not know my lords. Quiet, Buldeo—or I shall smack thy ribs! My lords may now come down."

The Englishmen came down, laughing—for they

happened to have a sense of humour. Gulab went on with the herd, saw Barath, pulled up and salaamed. Then the joy in his heart found utterance.

"I thank thee for thy words, Heaven-born," he cried in childish glee. "This is my day! Tell them!" For now the villagers, headed by the herdsman, were running up from all sides.

But even as Gulab was waving his arms Moolraj's gaze was upon him. He peered beneath his shaggy eyebrows, sprang off his horse and came to the boy.

"Child, since when hast thou had this?"—he pointed a shaking forefinger at a little scar on Gulab's brow. It was scarcely perceptible, except to one who sought to find it.

"Always," Gulab answered. "Longer than I can remember."

Moolraj lifted him off the buffalo bodily. Parting his legs, he looked at the left thigh on the inner side. "Yes, the mole!" It was scarce a whisper that broke from his lips.

Lifting the child in his arms, Moolraj rushed to Barath. "Heaven-born, my lost Girbur! I have found him!"

Then setting him down on the ground, he looked him all over. And the boy, startled by this sudden and strange attack, stood quite still, uttering not a sound, but gazing at Moolraj with round, wondering eyes.

Leaving the buffaloes to the care of the villagers, the herdsman strode up.

"Release the child!" he shouted. "He is my son! The village will bear testimony!" He seized the boy by the wrists and pulled him away: but Moolraj clutched at the heels and would not release his hold.

“Master, I appeal to thee!” he cried piteously to Barath. “Give me back my child!”

Barath was silent, in doubt. “I am but a child myself and cannot decide,” he said, bowing his head. “Decide among yourselves.”

With a cry of exultation the herdsman pulled hard; but Moolraj kept his hold, refusing to despair—to yield up hope in the very moment of its seeming realisation.

Thus stretched between this human rack, the little child that had curbed the raging bulls cried out in pain.

The cry went to Moolraj’s heart. He released his hold, laying the heels gently upon the ground. “My sins are great indeed—I have lost my child!” Saying this, he knelt upon the dust and covered up his face. The herdsman pulled away triumphantly, and took possession of the boy.

“Give the child to Moolraj: he is the father!” It was Barath that spoke, but now his voice was full and imperious, and full of wrath. “Seize the herdsman!”

A hush fell upon the multitude. Then a whisper passed, swelling to a full-throated shout of wonder, joy, yet vague fear.

“A Krishna! A Krishna! the judgment of Krishna!” For there were some who knew that a like judgment had been passed by the boy Krishna fifty centuries before.

The multitude fell upon the herdsman and bound him. The boy, remembering from whom the pain had ceased, took to Moolraj.

Holding him in his arms, Moolraj said, “Girbur thou art, Gulab thou hast been. Henceforth Girbur Gulab thou shalt be.” Then to hide his tears he rebuked the

boy. “*Arré*, my son, thou hast herded with low-caste beasts !”

“*Arré*, my father, the beasts have made a man of me !” He planted his little legs wide apart, and curled his fingers round his father’s beard.

Suddenly Moolraj sank on his knees and pressed his face to the dust. Clutching Girbur by the hand he pulled him to the ground, whispering, “Bow down—bow down !”

Then father and son, prostrate before Barath, said together :—

“Hail, Krishna, hail !”

And the multitude that had themselves cried “Krishna” a moment before, took this metaphorically—as but a testimony to the wisdom of Barath’s judgment.

For the faith of Moolraj, the centurion, surpassed the faith of all others.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

THE herdsman was brought to trial for stealing Moolraj's son. An ex-trooper of the guards, in the years of service he had once been severely reprimanded by Moolraj, and thus out of revenge had stolen his only child. The penalty for stealing an only child was five years' imprisonment; but if the prisoner had relatives dependent on him, each year of imprisonment might be commuted at his choice into fifty lashes. The herdsman pleaded that he had an aged mother, a widowed sister, and his wife dependent on him.

"Take off two years at once," he said defiantly. "After a month two years more."

Three stalwart men bound him to a post to give him the hundred lashes. He said not a word, nor uttered a cry of pain; but at the sixtieth blow he fainted.

"Is it enough?" they asked him when they had revived him and given him to drink.

"Fools, go on!" the herdsman answered sullenly.

So they gave him twenty more lashes with the same leather thongs. Already weakened, the criminal fainted again, bathed in blood.

"Is it now enough?" they asked him.

And having drunk the water they gave him, he cursed them all and bade them go on.

So they bound him again to give the remaining twenty. But after the fifth stroke something burst in his stubborn heart, and with blood in his mouth he cried out :—

“It is enough ! I have sinned.”

At the admission of guilt the executioners stopped. When they had bathed his body and bound his wounds, they brought him to Barath’s father to whom alone belonged the prerogative of mercy. Moved by a vague impulse the ruler of Barathpur turned to his son.

“What is thy will, my son ?” he asked. “Speak, and it shall be done.”

Barath turned to Moolraj. “Were it mine to choose between justice and mercy I could not hesitate. But thou art the injured parent and hast suffered the torments of the damned these last six years. Say what is thy will ?”

Moolraj held Girbur in his arms, now washed and clothed. “Heaven-born, my present joy is greater than the bygone pain. Pardon the sinner.”

Barath gave judgment : “Because thou didst confess thy guilt even though in thy agony, thou art forgiven. But go thou to the temple nearest thy home and there do penance.”

Going forth from his presence the criminal remained a herdsman still, but also became a humble sweeper at the threshold of the temple.

The multitude heard the judgment, and whispered among themselves : “The boy Barath, the brother and vicegerent of divine Rama, acted thus. None other since then at his age.”

To Barath’s parents the evidence pointing to his destiny—aye, perhaps the highest destiny possible to

man—was approaching completion. To his mother especially. Even as she had begun with fear at the first indication of something unusual in the birth and early childhood of Barath, so also her hope was the greater when she saw the signs multiply and the indications take a more definite shape. That she might live long enough to witness their realisation one would imagine she would pray. But to the true Hindu hope is independent of life; for a single life is but a small part of a great circle. Thus Rani Koikai did not repine when she heard the call of death.

Already she had felt the cords binding her heart to earth snapping asunder. For the last few years her heart had lived in a state of exaltation, though whenever conscious of the emotion she had tried to subdue it—lest, perchance, too early a hope might mar its ultimate realisation. Thus the inward struggle had continued undermining the foundations of life.

It was her body that failed. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, it had begun to lose in substance. Her husband and son, seeing her daily, had not noticed the change; for in an insidious decline of that nature some sudden shock or excitement—even though it were an outburst of joy—was needed to accelerate the decline and make it manifest. The incidents just recorded supplied that culmination. When she beheld her son acclaimed to be in some manner the equal of Krishna and of Barath the brother of Rama, the joy of her heart was too great for the strength of her body. Verily it was her body that failed.

Stricken in grief, her husband resolved to afford her the last comfort possible to a Hindu—to die on the banks of the Ganges. Borne in a palanquin, surrounded

by her sorrowing maidens, he took her from Barathpur when the end seemed nigh. Instructions were sent ahead to prepare her coming at a place below Harthawar, where the Ganges issues from the Himalayas into the plains below. There her husband and son accompanied her, to a state barge upon the stream itself.

A thousand pilgrims were trudging their way up either bank to the shrine of Harthawar, the "Gate of Heaven." They paused when they learnt that some one was dying upon the bosom itself of Mother Ganges, in sight of the "Gate of Heaven." For such a privilege was accorded to but few on earth.

When the sparks of life were flickering her husband and son stood on either side. To her husband she spoke words that the child could not understand, except that they indicated the last hope of a mother's heart for his ultimate destiny. Turning to Barath, she laid a wasted hand upon his head. "In the years to come thy father will send thee to a strange land afar off: there shalt thou find a woman who will be a new mother to thee, a woman with hair of silver, face of ivory, and heart of gold. All else is in Vishnu's hands.

"Kiss me, my child," she whispered. "Whatever thou art, I am still thy earthly mother."

Barath knelt down and kissed, not her face, nor her hands, but her feet.

"As thou wilt," she said with her last breath. With one hand she took his and held it to her lips, and with the other she took her husband's and held it to her bosom—till the last spark of life flickered and passed away.

Upon the bank the sorrowing retinue raised not a wail. Instead they gazed with dry eyes at the boat

reposing upon the bosom of the Ganges. To the bank her body was taken and placed upon a pyre of sandal-wood. Six hours after her ashes were collected and placed in a casket. Her husband would have it carried to Barathpur and there enshrined in a mausoleum.

But forty thousand pilgrims, seeing the pyre, had assembled on the banks.

“To Mother Ganges, to Mother Ganges she belongs—this thrice blessed among women!” they cried in exaltation.

In Rome the voice of the people had once elected a Pope when the Sacred College of Cardinals was divided in doubt: for the “quasi-inspiration” of the people was held to be the voice of God. So in a land of yet greater faith the inspiration of the people was sufficient for canonisation.

Bowing his head, the ruler of Barathpur went in the boat to the middle of the stream, and there consigned the casket to the bosom of the Ganges.

And the forty thousand pilgrims descended to the banks and bathed themselves to gain a plenary remission of their sins. Mother Ganges would grant a partial remission to all sinners at all times: but a plenary remission only when her waters were specially sanctified.

CHAPTER IX

MADHAVA IN THE CRUCIBLE

MADHAVA, the young law student who had jestingly told the boys in charge of the buffaloes to appeal to Barath to decide the right of leadership, witnessed awhile later Barath's judgment restoring to Moolraj his lost son. Madhava came home from that scene and went to his father.

"Father, send me to England to complete my education," he asked. "It is necessary."

The Eastern method of reasoning is intuitive, not dialectic; Madhava saw the necessity of going to England by a series of instantaneous flashes. The sequence of thought implied might indeed be amplified: the next reign in Barathpur would probably be of an exceptional character: men of ability would be needed and would have their opportunity: success in public life in a modern Indian State demanded something more than even the highest of Eastern culture, and an acquaintance with at least the principles of European knowledge was essential.

"If thou hast to make some sacrifice to send me to England I shall not forget it on my return. In after years I shall try——"

"No sacrifice is needed, my son," his father answered, "if I can arrange a suitable marriage for thee." For

every bride in India has a dowry, and where the marriage is a social gain to her family her father may even bear the expense of completing the bridegroom's education, if necessary ; and if that be already completed, the cost of giving the youth his first start in life.

Such assistance from a rich father-in-law is of frequent occurrence where the bridegroom's family is of high caste but poor. Yes, there are in India many families of the highest caste—descended from feudal thakurs, princes, even kings—whose present impoverishment must soon demand the attention of those responsible for the administration of India, or else the forces making for discontent will increase. The main cause of the impoverishment is simple :—

Indian feudalism was not of the English type ; hence the unintentional blunders committed by the host of English lawyers who went out to India with Warren Hastings. The eldest son did not necessarily succeed but the worthiest, were it a kingdom, a principality, or a minor domain. The eldest was often, indeed, the only son capable of feudal duties on the death of the father, but otherwise he was not generally the worthiest son intellectually, morally, or even physically, at least if the parents had married early.

In regard to private property it was divided equally among the sons ; hence after a few generations there were families of royal blood poorer than those to whom trade was possible. In the independent or semi-independent States of India there are now a vast number of such families whose only chance of livelihood is in the service of their respective rulers.

Madhava was a scion of the last dynasty of Jhansi—

whose spoliation by the East India Company in 1856 was one of the causes of the Mutiny, and whose last queen died on the field of battle. His ancestors found refuge in Barathpur. Its ruler granted them a small piece of land, but in the third generation the rental was inadequate to provide more than the necessities of life.

Madhava saw that he might in part provide for his people if he qualified in England for high service in Barathpur. Besides the reasons already mentioned there was a special one : Barath himself would have to go to England for a like purpose in due course ; for the promise made on his name-day by his father to Colonel Wingate was known to all Barathpur. Hence the next administration in the State might in part be of an English character. Moreover, Madhava's visit to England would prepare the way for the coming of his master : for he would return three years before Barath set out, so that the net result of his English education and the general effect of his English experience would be available for Barath's guidance.

But here was Madhava's supreme difficulty : he wished to enter one of the Inns of Court in London and qualify for the English Bar, so that he might be of use in the judicial, legislative, or even the executive administration of his State ; and he must stay three years in England to do so—for which he had not the means. True that with the extraordinary faculty for law he had already shown at the Bombay University he might gain a few scholarships at the Inn, but he lacked the means for even the initial expenses. Hence his father's suggestion to find for him a rich wife. But most of the families of his own high caste

were equally poor ; thus the necessity of seeking slightly lower in the social scale.

Now although the caste-system of India forbids a woman to marry beneath her, a man is not so debarred, provided the disparity in caste be not very great or has some compensation making for national welfare. The old Hindu lawgivers anticipated the discoveries of modern European sociology. They saw that where both parents could not be of equally high rank, it was better for the children of a nation that the father should be of higher caste than the mother, in preference to the mother being higher than the father.

As mentioned in a former chapter, Madhava's neighbour was a wealthy sonar, who had a pretty daughter. The sonars of India have had a history curiously similar to that of their brethren in England. The prosperous goldsmiths of England became the nation's bankers when Charles II. borrowed money from them, could not pay, and granted them instead a charter constituting them thenceforth the " Bank of England." By a strange analogy the sonars of India now combine the two functions of goldsmith and banker.

Undoubtedly there was a certain disparity in caste between Madhava's family and its neighbour, but there was also the compensation, apart from wealth. In India beauty in a mother is a national asset, and women of the sonar caste are generally beautiful ; hence their ability to marry considerably above their rank. Perhaps their beauty is in part due to their constant association with gold, at least such is their own belief. A small piece of soft virgin gold, entirely free from alloy, kept in the mouth beneath the tongue, is deemed by them to be a recipe for feminine beauty.

Possibly the constant contact with the teeth wears out minute particles which in time get into the body. Whatever the cause of their beauty may be, sonar women use that recipe from childhood, and possess at least a beautiful complexion: a rich olive, "born of the union of cream and gold."

So Madhava's father opened negotiations with the sonar for the hand of his daughter Kamona. She was only thirteen, and Madhava eighteen; but the arrangements would take at least six months, and after marriage the bride would still live with her parents, while the bridegroom completed his education. In this case he would be sent to England, at his father-in-law's expense. On his return after three years the young couple would live together. Such, at least, was a frequent practice in India; for though the marriage was in reality no more than a betrothal, it was irrevocable, and had the force of the solemn betrothal of Catholic Europe. Henry VIII.'s plea for nullity against Catherine of Aragon was her prior betrothal to his elder brother, hence his claim to the tie of affinity by that fact alone, notwithstanding the subsequent Papal dispensation. Similarly in India the betrothal or "first marriage" is irrevocable without the possibility of dispensation.

While the negotiations were progressing Kamona, being only thirteen, could appear unveiled—since freedom in a bride was curtailed by a series of gradations according to her rank; the higher the rank, the sooner the curtailment. She was still a child, very pretty, with a promise of yet greater beauty. But the consciousness of beauty—at least with sonar women, who have not quite the innate delicacy of the highest-

born—has a corresponding disadvantage, as if by way of compensation against compensation. It engenders a sense of coquetry. In a mere child that may reveal itself only in a desire for admiration, though in grown-up women of the sonar caste it may unconsciously lead to a danger zone from which there is usually no withdrawal without some bitterness and heart-burning.

In Kamona the unconscious desire for admiration led to her association with girls of her own age; and as there was none in the neighbourhood exactly of her own caste, she had to seek among the daughters of the skilled artisans of the village—whom one might even call artists. Their caste was only a trifle below hers; in fact in ancient times the two were exactly the same, and it was only the frequent capturing of husbands of high caste that gradually elevated hers.

Now it has ever been the custom of the East—from India to Palestine, from to-day to the days of Rebekah—that the maidens of a village should go to the common well to draw water for the evening's use. So Kamona's friends came to the well beneath the venerable peepul-tree, chatting and laughing and gossiping, with pitchers deftly balanced on their heads—which practice was indeed artfully designed by their mothers to ensure to them the possession of a graceful gait and a fine figure, and ultimately to the capturing of husbands in more ways than one. For apart from the gait and the figure thus acquired, the village well is the biggest match-maker in the East.

The village youths at play *will* come to the well to search for a lost ball, a lost arrow, or what-not. And among the girls themselves accidents *will* happen whenever a likely boy is about: for the

rope *will* break with the weight of the full pitcher, or the pitcher slip from the little hands and fall gurgling into the well. Then what more natural than that the youth should bashfully approach, go down the well, gripping the circular ridges within, hand over hand, recover the pitcher, fill it, and restore it to the pretty owner?

Thus Kamona also came to the well, though her mother gave her a silver pitcher to distinguish her from the rest; and the only gentleman's son in the neighbourhood happened to be Madhava. Then what more natural than that Kamona's pitcher should slip from her hands, or some other difficulty arise, just when Madhava happened to come out for a stroll before his evening study?

Now there was a tacit compact among the girls not to poach upon one another's preserves. So when a particular girl's cavalier was espied no accident happened to the rest; in fact they discreetly withdrew to a tree fifty yards away and hurriedly started some play of their own.

Madhava noticed Kamona's little difficulty, and came to her rescue with an indulgent smile. This first encounter was some months before his father had even thought of arranging a marriage; and being two or three years older than the village boys, he regarded Kamona as he would any other child. Of course he was struck by her beauty—in a purely artistic sense. Yet, strange to narrate, he found himself instinctively going towards the well on subsequent evenings, instead of strolling at random. And, stranger still, for fear of possible accidents he would quietly take the pitcher from her, fill it, and hand it to her. But when, averting her head, she held out her tiny hands to receive it,

there was somehow a little unbridged gap : either the pitcher was held a trifle too far from her hands, or the hands were held a trifle too far from the pitcher. So of course she was *compelled* to turn her face full to take the pitcher, and thus to meet the youth's gaze.

Was Madhava in love after the third, the fifth, the seventh, or even the tenth time ? He would have laughed had any one told him so. To him it was but the proper pride a youth might feel in whose veins was the blood of bygone heroes ; the pride of befriending the weak and helping the helpless. And yet, and yet, in the heart of every knight there is some love for the lady he rescues or fights for ; and at eighteen every high-born youth is a knight ; he magnifies in his heart every little deed done in the service of a beautiful maiden—and makes dragons of wind and rain, or even fallen pitchers.

Unconsciously, imperceptibly, Madhava came to love Kamona, child though she was. Rather, having the gift of imagination, he felt that he would be in love with her three years later, when she was quite grown up and they were truly married ; and in the years of youth the anticipation of joy is even better than the realisation. Thus, even so as by anticipation, he was deeply in love with her. As for Kamona herself, who was but a child, the feeling could not be the same. It was rather a sense of satisfaction at the prospect of fulfilling the most fortunate traditions of her caste by obtaining a husband of high rank.

Speak to each other ? Impossible—the one thing impossible in India. They could meet at the well-side beneath the peepul-tree, but could not speak to each other. *To* each other. But the Indian proverb

runs : "Mia bibi razi, kia kare khazi ?"—which means that if my lady be willing, all the king's horses and all the king's men could not part us asunder. So if they could not speak *to* each other, there was no law to prevent them from speaking *at* each other. The youth could address his remarks to the birds in the tree above ; and the maiden, gazing into the well with downcast eyes, give her answers to the nymphs beneath. What did it matter if the answer fitted the question ? Verily they were speaking to the birds and the nymphs, not to each other.

Thus it came to pass that Madhava confided to the birds his prospects of going to England, qualifying for high service in Barathpur, and perhaps attaining the height of his ambition, aided by luck, within ten years. And Kamona, sighing to the nymphs for sympathy, said that ten years was so very long—why, she would then be nearly twice as old ! Then Madhava earnestly pleaded with the birds to tell the nymphs that he hoped to attain *some* degree of distinction much sooner, and would strenuously endeavour to retrieve the fallen fortunes of his house not for his own sake but for the sake of her who would share with him his destiny.

One day this quadrilateral dialogue was interrupted. A gorgeous cavalcade was passing ; seeing the well it pitched its tents beside it. An elderly *thakur* (feudal baron) was on his way to the palace of Barathpur five miles away on a visit, but as the most auspicious time of arrival was the morning, not the evening, he ordered his escort to arrange for his encampment for the night beneath the peepul-tree. He saw from the silver howdah of his elephant the young couple by the well-side, and

could not, of course, fail to notice the maiden's beauty and the prospect of yet greater beauty in the near future.

Kamona, attracted by the magnificent cavalcade, turned to look with feminine curiosity. Madhava, watching her gaze, hastened to satisfy her curiosity : he explained to the birds that the thakur was one of the most powerful barons in the kingdom of Barathpur, and perhaps the richest. But with innate, though vague, chivalry he did not mention the main sources of the riches. It happened that coal and iron had been discovered in the State of Barathpur a few years before. A concession had been granted to a company to work the mines. But though the company was nominally under English management, the best part of its finances was supplied by this thakur—who, though of fairly high caste, had some streak of Marwari blood in him, and thus could not keep his hands off trade.

By this time Madhava had unconsciously worked up his heart into the highest pitch of love. The very denial of expressions or manifestations of love demanded by pre-nuptial etiquette served to feed the inward flame : if it could not burn outwardly, it burned all the more deeply. And then his imagination fed the fire still further ; for he drew pictures of his married life, what he would do each day, how deserve his bliss, how enjoy it, how increase it. Thus by the time the private negotiations for the marriage had progressed so far that the first public announcement was about to be made in the shape of mutual festivities between the contracting families, Madhava no longer disguised his love, nay, hugged himself to sleep each night with thoughts of it.

Then suddenly there fell a thunderbolt from the blue. Just before the public announcement, at the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth minute, the bride's father broke off the negotiations without assigning a cause. Madhava's father, as was to be expected from his caste, accepted the situation in proud silence: he forbade the sonar's name ever to be mentioned in his presence. Not so Madhava himself: he was in a frenzy of mingled love and rage. With a lover's instinct he suspected and feared some tangible cause, perchance a rival offer more congenial to the sonar's mercenary taste—a rich suitor, aye, and elderly. With the ardour of youth he thought of some desperate expedient. In the history of India the story of young Lochinvar has been frequently enacted: and Madhava thought of attacking the bridal procession with a few friends and carrying off Kamona, if his conjecture was true.

He had almost resolved upon this course when there fell upon him like a blight the fear that Kamona herself might be a willing party to the new arrangement. Had she been two or three years older she would instinctively have preferred a young husband to an old one; but at thirteen and a half a husband was a mere idea; and then there was the new suitor's wealth, which implied a speedy prospect of magnificence, with fine robes and finer jewels.

Then Madhava's father intervened. While expressing sympathy with the youth in his disappointment, he told him decisively that a marriage with the sonar's daughter was now impossible under any condition. Implicit obedience to the parental will is a moral law in India: Madhava crushed his heart and buried himself in his studies. But he could not shut out the

clamorous sounds of high revelry that soon began in the neighbouring mansion and its extensive gardens. Thus for three months.

He was spared the last immolation of his heart: the knowledge of the actual wedding-day. His father came to him and said, "My son, I have arranged for thee to go to England forthwith, and have booked thy passage."

Meeting Madhava's inquiring gaze, he laughed bitterly. "Yes, I have mortgaged the land. But I know that my son on his return will redeem it." This he added quietly as a trivial detail.

Madhava silently knelt and kissed his father's feet. Taking his right hand in his own he placed it upon his head, and said, "I promise."

"It is well," his father answered. "Now go, my son. The ship awaits."

So Madhava rose up from his knees, and within the hour was in the *ekka* (pony-cart) that was to take him to the nearest railway-station seven miles away. Thence he went by train to Bombay to join the ship.

CHAPTER X

THE COMING OF SUVONA

THREE years after his mother's death, at the age of fifteen, Barath was sent to school. A Raj-Kumar College ("Collège for Princes") had recently been opened at ~~Ag~~ there under English masters. Its purpose was to supply as much as possible the advantages of Eton or Harrow to the young princes of India. The boys studied under the personal supervision of the masters, but in deference to Indian customs lived in separate apartments and had a small retinue. In class and at sport they met one another, and after mutual friendships had thus been formed occasional entertainments in their own apartments were permitted.

Barath was sent to this college to prepare for Cambridge in due course. Viswa-mitra had taught him sufficient English to enable him to follow the instructions of his new masters. Their teachings would be entirely secular, and cast on Western lines. On the Eastern side Vashista, the High Priest of Vishnu, had already taught Barath the principles of his faith and something of its philosophy; and the noble traditions of his house, which were an integral part of Indian history, he had imbibed with his mother's milk, and had subsequently assimilated with the assistance of Delini and Viswa-mitra.

Hence his father had no misgivings in handing him over to his English tutors. He personally brought Barath to the college, which was to be his home for the next three years except during vacation. Yet there was no solemn leave-taking. All that the father said was to remind the son that now for the first time he would be under the gaze of his equals.

"See that thy deeds are worthy of thy house. Remember the honour of thy house—and thy mother's memory." With that the father parted from his son.

But Viswa-mitra, who had also come, privately saw the principal of the college. To his surprise and delight he found in him an old acquaintance—indeed his most formidable rival at Cambridge for the highest honours in mathematics for their individual college.

"In this boy you will find," Viswa-mitra said to him, "a student worthy of your teaching. Take a special care of him."

"We shall do our best for him," the Englishman answered. "But of course we give equal attention to all our pupils."

"True. Yet in this boy you will find something above the average. One who might possibly repay your highest efforts by actual results. See that when he goes to Cambridge you will have taught him so much that he will reawaken there the memory of his first English tutor."

"I am afraid I am now forgotten at Cambridge, and my memory past awakening." This the Englishman said with a tinge of regret. In the years of early manhood he had just missed the Fellowship of his college, which would have enabled him to live in England. Instead he had to come to India for a living, and was lost to fame.

“Nevertheless, pray accept my hope,” Viswa-mitra added. For he had now an equal faith in Barath’s capacity to learn, and his English tutor’s ability to teach, something unusual, perchance something unique.

The Englishman accepted the hope, and tried his utmost. With what result we shall see in due course.

Barath now found himself in a new world. His studies may be depicted later in a single episode summing up their entire result. But the greatest novelty to him was the personal contact with other young princes. These were of all grades ; for in India there are grades even among rulers—depending, not on the extent of their territories, but on the length of their lineage. There are some owning a comparatively small domain, but of an ancestry in rulership dating back anything from thirteen to thirty centuries ; others of good caste but of later origin—chiefly creatures of the Moghul Empire ; and a few of indifferent caste and of recent origin, who have carved out a domain from the wreck of the Moghul Empire by their valour or their statesmanship.

The ruler of Chitorgarh was of the highest lineage ; his heir, Udai, occupied the apartments adjacent to Barath’s. A close friendship arose between the two boys, and within three months they were like brothers. Udai was about a year older, and one of the leaders at sport. Coming from a Rajput stock in which fighting had been the one occupation of princes, in whose regard there was no code or ideal outside of the *Mahabharata* and no worthy deed except those of its heroes, Udai had been sent to this school partly for the sake of an English education, but especially for the advan-

tage of mixing with boys of his own caste. Chitorgarh was still a medieval State, where thakurs and knights still came to Court in coat-of-mail, and men-at-arms kept watch and ward on the battlemented walls and announced the hour with clanging gong. It was not so necessary for its future ruler to have a complete English education as to maintain the traditions of his house. Udai did so at school by excelling in all manly sport.

Barath, on the other hand, had a tendency to study—aye, to become a bookworm. In the first six months he was twice promoted to the form next above, but in games he was very near the bottom of the school. Then Udai protested.

“Brother, it is wicked to waste all thy time on books. Do you know what the other fellows say?” This he said partly in Hindi, partly in English. Boys in an English school in India often use their own language and English promiscuously.

“No,” Barath answered quietly. “Something horrible?”

“It is,” Udai snorted. “They say that some day thy father will put a *sari* on thee, and make a woman of thee!”

This was about the bitterest taunt that schoolboys could hurl at one of their own caste. Yet Barath smiled indulgently.

“But it is wicked,” Udai went on vehemently, “to waste thy talent. I know when I see a straight arm, a supple wrist, a quick glance. I have licked many youngsters into shape.” This he added proudly; rather, he said something still more expressive which I am toning down in English.

So Barath was persuaded to lay aside his books at certain intervals, and follow his comrades in sport under Udai's guidance. Horsemanship he had already learnt from Moolraj, but in sword-play and marksmanship Udai imparted to him something of his own proficiency. "Shabash, brother," he would say encouragingly. "That cut would have severed a Moghul's head!" Or if in rifle practice, "That shot would have brought to earth a *sambur* in flight."

It was also the design of the college to afford opportunities for actual hunting at certain intervals, in the same manner that the boys would have had in their own homes. Hunting tigers or wild boars was as yet too dangerous; but the *sambur*, the lord of the forest glade, the magnificent red-deer of northern India, was just the most suitable object for their prowess. Mounted on swift English hunters, the boys would approach the forest. Their horsemanship was so perfect that they could lie low along the horse's side unobserved. Even the wary *sambur* would be deceived, and would often allow the apparently riderless horses to come within a hundred yards.

Then suddenly the hunters would break into a gallop, each with a rider on its back, and thus perhaps gain another ten or twenty yards on the prey. But with a swift spring the *sambur* would be in full flight, scorning the fleetest horse, drawing ahead many yards at each stride. Thus tantalised with the hope of escape, at the very moment that hope was being realised it would be struck down by an ungenerous bullet. For it was deemed the finer sport to let the stag have a run for its life, and to fire only at the limit of the bullet's effective range.

Barath's father had given him a hunter of the finest quality, so he could have easily forged ahead of his comrades in the chase itself. Yet he was generally content to keep level with the main body, and allow Udai or some one else to have the first and only shot. But once the horse would not be denied, or perchance his own blood was coursing fast through his veins : he drew a dozen yards ahead of the rest.

"Fire, brother, or it will escape!" Udai shrieked in agony.

Barath's carbine went up, and there was a report. The sambur gave a frantic leap, regained the earth, and fled with the wind.

They waited for it to drop; for a sambur, even if shot through the heart, will run a full hundred yards and then drop dead. Instead, Barath's prey vanished from sight, leaving only a little memento. It was one of its antlers, cut off a foot from the top. Which undoubtedly would be a future advantage in escaping through a dense forest.

The boys galloped on, and Udai picked up the broken antler. He examined it and laughed.

"I am sorry, brother, thou hast not a complete head to adorn thy room; still, this little piece is something. It was neatly cut." This he added quietly, as an afterthought.

But in Barath's heart there was a sense of peace he could not define nor express.

And now my heart is filled with sorrow in having to chronicle a totally different incident. Yet I must be truthful, heaven and earth notwithstanding. Every human action, good or evil, must bear fruit,

good or evil. So far I have recorded Barath's good deeds, and they were many. But human perfection ceases to be human if it be all perfection.

The hunting of the tiger that does harm to others is one thing, the hunting of the peaceful deer quite another. Constant participation in it, even in the mildest form, must leave some residual effect in one's moral perception. If you torture a little fish with a hook, then even if you do not kill it and eat it, but fling it back to the water alive, your pleasure has been its pain : and the equation of life demands that the balance must be restored in some shape or form—even if it be the woman you love that plays with you as you played with the fish.

It is true, indeed, that the hunting of the sambur tends to develop the instinct of true sportsmanship ; but it is possible to be a true "sportsman"—that is, a true gentleman—without the shedding of blood or the giving of pain. It is the hankering to kill something just because it is a fine day that matters in the long run ; for in time it must act as an accumulation of small retrograde motions in one's moral progression. Then suddenly the accumulated sum may be manifested in a single deed, to one's astonishment and regret.

In Barath the regret was eternal. Yet in a sense the regret and the deed were all a part of his karma, and without them he could not have been himself. So again we come back to the eternal circle, the eternal design.

Now to the deed. Barath and Udai became such intimate friends that in their second year their parents allowed them to spend a part of their holidays at each other's home. When Barath was sixteen he visited Chitorgarh for the first time, to spend a few days with

Udai at the summer palace. The grounds were beautifully laid out in flower-beds, pools, and the various artificial devices of a summer palace.

One afternoon Barath happened to be standing at a balcony lined with flower-pots, the tops of which were decorated with loose pebbles. A peacock flew down from a tree and alighted on the ground quite forty feet away. It spread out its tail in the levelled rays of the setting sun.

The bird was a splendid target, and the association of ideas did the rest. Mechanically Barath stretched out his hand ; a pebble was within easy reach—or else there might have been time for thought. He picked up the pebble and cast it at the bird without a thought. The action was almost involuntary, and prompted by a species of impulse irresistible for just that first second in which its accomplishment was possible. It was in that one second that Barath cast the stone. For it needs just that one second to utter the cruel word that rises hot to the lips—to stab beyond healing and kill a lifelong love.

He repented of it in the next second, whilst yet the stone was in the air. For the first time in his life a sense of wrong-doing surged through his heart. He felt a vague yearning to recall the stone, to pull it back to his hand. But the stone had gone from the hand, and would continue to fall to the end of time until stopped by some object to its hurt. Barath prayed that his aim might fail ; but it was ordained otherwise. The stone fell upon the bird. He heard a muffled thud, closed his eyes a moment, opened them again, saw the wounded peacock lie fluttering on the ground. Slowly, painfully it arose and walked away, crying softly,

unable to fly. It walked to the nearest pool, and as it went past the balcony it glanced at the boy—as if in apprehension. But to Barath there was a message of pain and sorrow and reproach in the glance.

In that moment he suffered an agony greater far than the pain of the wounded bird. And in the pain of the bird was revealed to him the pain of the world. A voice in his ear bade him arise and expiate his sin, bade him that henceforth his task must be to lessen pain, not to increase it. That was his mission.

Why not? Even through temptation is salvation wrought, and through sin perfection. Some one must suffer for the sake of the world, even if it be a bird. So it was with Valmikli, the world's greatest poet, and the author of the *Ramayana*, the finest work of the human intellect—combining in one the dignity of Homer, the human insight of Shakespeare, and the wide conception of Wagner. Born in an age when all poetry was vocal, not written, Valmikli found the divine flame burning deep in his heart; but from childhood he had been stricken with dumbness. Then in a thoughtless moment he shot an arrow at a heron. The wounded bird cried softly, and died. The cry went to Valmikli's heart, and burst the strings that tied his tongue. He cried out in his anguish—

“Henceforth thy *shoka* (pain) shall be my *sloka* (poetic couplet).” And he said that in a *sloka*. Thenceforth the heron's pain was Valmikli's penance. So he composed the *Ramayana*. The dying heron was in part the author of the world's noblest work.

In like manner with Barath. He saw the vision of the world's pain in the eyes of the peacock he had wounded, and thus found his destiny. . . .

A child ran out from a room beneath, and went to the peacock. She threw her arms round its neck and kissed it. Barath descended from the balcony and came to her.

"See, some wicked man has hurt it," she appealed to him. "My pretty, pretty peacock!"

Barath's remorse was now doubly great. "It was I," he said huskily. "But I did not know it was thine."

He dipped his handkerchief in the pool and bathed the wound. The water relieved the pain, and the bird regained its wonted activity. The child stroked its neck, and let it go. The peacock spread out its tail in the sun and walked away to the flower-beds.

Barath and the child watched it in silence for awhile. "Hast thou forgiven me, little one?" he then said to her.

"Yes," she answered gently. "Thou didst not really mean to hurt it."

He guessed she could only be Udai's little sister.

"Are we friends now?" he asked.

"The friend of my brother is my friend."

Then a great yearning arose in his heart. His mother was dead, and Delini had gone out of his life on her marriage four years before. He had none to love, save his father—which was not enough. He had dumbly felt the want of something more. In this moment it found utterance.

"Nothing more, little one?" he asked tenderly. "Nothing more than thy brother's friend? Udai is more than my friend: he is my brother."

"The brother of my brother is my brother," she answered.

Thus Suvona came into Barath's life. She was only

eight, but very pretty even at that age, and sweetly tender. Yet she had the blood of heroines in her veins, Rajput princesses who had done battle for a brother, lover, or husband with sword and lance, yea, astride his corpse.

But in that moment the spirit of heroines was veiled : Barath saw only her mercy, her forgiveness. He had found a new sister.

CHAPTER XI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

To one of Barath's delicate susceptibility it was natural that the incident of the peacock should make an indelible impression upon his memory. Its individual karma had to bear fruit inevitably ; and the more trivial the incident the sooner its karma must be made manifest and be absolved.

For the next two years Barath was assailed by a thousand temptations that racked his mind with pain. The temptations assumed the most treacherous garb they could, the garb of doubt. Barath began to doubt most things. The temptations were treacherous because there was a subtle insinuation of mental humility in the very fact of doubting, whereas in reality the doubt was begotten by an insidious form of mental pride, for it went beyond the things perceived by the senses, and traversed the domain of faith and hope. The temptation came to Barath to doubt his destiny—aye, his very existence. To believe that all phenomena were mere delusions.

Who was he ? Was he a reality, or a mere delusion ? Had he anything more than the body or the fruit of the body ? A soul ? But what was the thing they called a soul ? Could he see it, touch it, feel it ? How did it reside within his body ? What kept it there, and

prevented it from running away ? And what happened to it when he slept ? Was it dead then ; rather, did it also sleep then ? Or worse, did it then actually separate from his body ? If so, why did it rejoin the body on awaking ? And why separate *permanently* on death ? Was sleep but a lesser form of death ? . . . No—mere delusions—delusions all !

For two years Barath struggled with the temptation, inwardly, silently, in pain and anguish, and found no light ; it could only be accorded him after the fullest expiation and purification. But meanwhile he was not denied some solace in the one thing essential in that period of his life—his yearning for affection. He had frequently gone to Chitorgarh to stay with Udai and Suvona ; and in return Udai had sometimes come to Barathpur to visit him. And, strange as it may seem, it was the friendship of the sons that caused the friendship of the parents. Barath's and Udai's fathers had indeed exchanged greetings as among rulers, but had never met personally. Afterwards they became such friends that all who saw marvelled whether the friendship of the sons was the greater, or that of the fathers.

So in the two years Barath frequently saw Udai and Suvona. She would sometimes sit on Barath's knee, pass her little fingers through his hair and talk to him sweetly, so that she was just like a little sister to him. One day, coming in suddenly, her father and his saw them thus—and seeing, smiled, and exchanged glances with each other. To Barath it was the seal of their approval of his brotherhood. . . .

At the end of his eighteenth year Barath was to leave school. A curious incident happened to hasten his

coming to England. As a true Eastern he had always seen things in flashes, not reasoned them out link by link ; yet under his English tutors a great change had come over him. For the first time he had realised the power of the human mind to make chains of thoughts, to link them together in a sequence. Indeed the capacity of the Eastern to make an abstraction from ideas—nay, an abstraction from abstractions—is common enough ; but when allied to it there was also the Western dialectic method of reasoning, the result was likely to be remarkable, at least in the case of a gifted mind like Barath's.

The doubts that had assailed him for two years had begun to lessen in intensity and frequency. Instead, his tutor, the principal of the college, often noted a look of abstraction in his eyes, and sometimes found him absent-minded even in his routine work. One day Barath was thus absorbed in thought, and yet sub-consciously drawing figures and diagrams, when he suddenly heard his tutor's voice asking him what he was doing.

" Say that again ! " the tutor exclaimed, when he had heard the boy.

Mechanically Barath spoke his thoughts. He had a picture in his mind of ascending and descending along a series of ridges and valleys on the Himalayas, so that his altitude was continuously changing. And that picture he was vaguely trying to depict in words that would crystallise its essence.

" And your inference therefrom ? " the tutor asked.
" General inference, the most general you can give ? "

Barath felt that he was about to rush into a mental region far above his experience. He hesitated.

“Think, think! Don’t let the inspiration pass! Generalise!” For the tutor saw the boy clutching at the thought. The supreme moment might pass away—yet Barath was tongue-tied.

“Speak! Why don’t you speak? Can’t you generalise? Can’t you find a single phrase, a single formula, for the picture in your mind? Then give it in parts. Don’t look like that! What has come over you? Can’t you speak? At the threshold of a new world do you hesitate?” The Englishman was strangely moved. The sight of a falling apple had revealed the primary laws of the universe. Here was a vision that might carry the human mind a step farther.

As one in a dream, Barath spoke, scarcely conscious of the actual words he used. In flashes.

“It changes continuously. Higher and higher, to the highest at the top of a pinnacle—then lower and lower to the bottom of the valley beyond. . . . Then again higher and higher to the highest on the next pinnacle—and lower and lower to the lowest in the valley beyond. . . . Any consecutive variation is infinitesimal and smaller than the mind can conceive, yet it can be realised by the subsequent effect. . . . Even after a pinnacle the change must continue; after a highest there must come a lowest before another highest can be reached. For there are many highests, but one higher than them all—even as there are gods among gods, but One higher than them all. . . .”

“Do you make the proposition *absolutely* general? Applicable to *all* changes in the physical world?”

“I do,” Barath answered. “Even to things other than physical. For the world itself is one continuous change—something tells me inwardly.”

The tutor sat silent awhile, gazing into Barath's eyes.

"Yes, Viswa-mitra was right! God knows who taught you this; *I* didn't. Boy, boy, you don't know what you have been talking about! Have you ever heard of the theory of 'Maxima and Minima'—which is the last abstraction of an abstraction upon many abstractions? Yes, there are many maxima, but one maximum above them all."

There was a vague scorn in the Englishman's voice. Barath sat silent with bowed head. Then his tutor laid his hand upon his head and spoke to him in soft words.

"Go from here; there is little for you here. Go to Cambridge. There they will teach you—perhaps." He laughed and added, "And tell them that I was your first English tutor. Then they may remember me!"

And in that vision of the world's continuous change Barath found at last the answer to his doubts. His body was changing and his soul likewise—not in essence, but in development. All phenomena were not delusions; some of them might be mere changes from those he now instinctively felt to be real, or different aspects of the same. True that the mere faculty of reasoning was not sufficient to enable him to come to that comforting conclusion, but the gift of vision—of seeing things in flashes—supplemented the reasoning. For the mental vision of the world's continuous change also implied a vision of the reality of material phenomena—of the distinction between mind and matter—wherefore that he possessed something beyond the body, call it a soul or what one would.

Thus did he find absolution, after more than two

years of purification, from the one small adverse karma of his boyhood. For the expiation, the seeing of the vision, was itself a pain—of which more hereafter.

Barath's father could not reconcile his heart to part with him at once.

"Go first and spend a month with thy friend," he said, "so that he comes to stay a month with us in return."

Barath went to Chitorgarh, and after the month returned with Udai and Suvona. She had not seen Barathpur before, moreover her father did not wish her to be parted from Udai. Possibly he had other thoughts besides.

Barath's last month at home was perhaps the happiest of his life. Also in some degree the saddest. He was to be absent from it for six long years. Hence the comfort of having both Udai and Suvona with him these last few days. They did everything that youthful minds could devise. The greatest delight of the boys was to ride together; for they were now big enough to mount the largest horse.

Suvona often accompanied them. She was not quite eleven, and had no need to veil. So Udai sometimes drove her in an *ekka* (pony-cart) while Barath rode beside them, with Moolraj just ten lance-lengths behind. Barath would go ahead, pull up sharp, and allow the *ekka* to overtake him. Or sometimes he would gallop on, describe a large circle, sweep round, come up from the rear, and range up beside his friends.

One day, flushed with the sport, he drew up suddenly so close to the *ekka* that Suvona looked up in startled delight.

He held out a hand to her. "Come, little sister! Have a gallop!"

She arose, and sprang into his arms. He seated her sideways before him, and spurred his horse.

"Hold me!" he cried, for she swayed with the motion.

She put up her arms to hold something. They found themselves around his neck. She locked her fingers behind, so that her upturned face was but a span from his.

"Faster, dearest?" he asked, urging the horse.

"Yes!" she whispered. But her eyes were swimming. She tightened her fingers, and drew her face closer.

"Yet faster, sweetest?" He spurred the steed to its quickest speed.

"Yes! I am not afraid! I trust thee."

But she closed her eyes. For the first time in her life she felt the intoxication of rushing through the air. A thousand senses were creeping over her, tingling through her body—in mingled joy and terror. Her heart was throbbing against her breast; her lips were parted as the hot panting breath sought to escape from her tumultuous bosom. Her blood was coursing wildly through her veins, perchance awaking a thousand memories.

A thousand hereditary memories transmitted to her blood by her noble ancestors. No maiden of her house in this generation had ever ridden on horseback; hence her joyous terror in that mad gallop. But in the past a maiden had so ridden—with lance in hand on the field of battle to the rescue of her lover; and her blood still flowed in Suvona's veins. Suvona revelled in that thought; for the first time the sweet tenderness of her

nature was supplemented by the heroism of the women of her house. And in that union a new instinct was begotten within her.

A new instinct that set astir every fibre in her body. Something she could not understand or even define, yet something she mutely felt was irresistibly entering among the mainsprings of her emotions, and would henceforth be the greatest of them. Something that was changing her material existence, and imparting to it a new form that was not altogether child-like. And in the awakening of that instinct her soul and body were suffused with a subtle pleasure and pain, but pain through the very intensity of the pleasure.

As one in a dream the picture of her noble ancestress fighting for her lover passed through Suvona's mind. She felt a vague yearning to be like that ancestress in some manner : to yield up her life, her all, for some one. Not any one, but perhaps some one in particular and no other. True that the maiden of her house of whom she was thinking was a woman at the time, whereas she herself was but a child. No, not altogether a child—the thought rose wildly to her heart, but with an inarticulate cry of terror she stifled it.

Barath heard the cry, and gazed down into her face less than a span away. Her eyes were still closed, but her lips were quivering. Through his own heart a new joy had also been surging, a new fire coursing through his veins. For some time past he had indeed claimed Suvona as his new-found sister, and had lavished endearments upon her. But to one of his strong and intense nature something more was needed. The yearning perchance to throw a protecting arm around something weaker than himself, something fragile ;

above all, something that would cling to him seeking that protection.

And now he saw Suvona before him, clinging to him.

What joy was this—no, what pain, what agony? He bent his face upon her face, till his eyes were upon her eyes, his lips upon her lips—almost. Then a sudden tumult arose in his heart, a sudden shock surged through his entire frame. He raised his lips from her un-kissed lips, slowly, higher and higher. Upon her brow he pressed the kiss.

“Sister, awake!”

She opened her eyes, awaking from her dream.

As the hour of Barath's departure drew near the old fears that had assailed the mind of Vashista the High Priest returned with redoubled force. For now Barath was passing beyond his personal guidance, and anything might happen in England in the years of absence. He and Viswa-mitra came to Barath the day before the departure.

“My son,” Vashista said to him, “remember the faith of thy forefathers. Not that anything can weaken it if thy destiny be—of the highest. Yet every individual deed must bear fruit, heaven and earth notwithstanding.”

“Father, when I am in England I shall try to avoid the evil and seek only the good.”

“Aye, but it is the good that is in England that I fear the most; the evil could never touch thee. Above all, I fear this man to whom thou art going—Wingate. My son, if ever in a moment of enthusiasm he were to depict to thee, even indirectly, the noblest principles of his faith, thou wilt not forget those of thine own? Promise me!”

“ I promise. I shall remember the faith of my forefathers.”

Viswa-mitra was more hopeful ; he had known Wingate personally.

“ He is not the man to proselytise any one consciously. Rather it is possible, just possible—what strange thought is this within me ?—that he will not be the pursuer, but the pursued. . . . Once, years ago, when we were friends and he was seeking enlightenment, I had felt—yea, had hoped—that some day perchance he might have accepted a new destiny. Yes, he should have been a *rishi* . . . ! ” Viswa-mitra was wrapt in thought. Suddenly he roused himself.

“ Child, child, I have a vision ! Nay, only a picture that pleases me ! If ever the yearning returns to him to seek enlightenment, thou wilt not deny it to him ? Promise me ! ”

“ O teacher, how can I that am without light give enlightenment ? ” Barath answered.

“ When the moment comes thou shalt know what to say. If Vishnu inspires him with the yearning he will inspire thee with the power of enlightenment. Promise me ! ”

“ O *guru*, I know not what I say, but I promise ! If ever the spirit moves me ! ”

“ It is well ! ” Viswa-mitra said, bowing his head. . . .

That evening Barath spent with Udai and Suvona. He saw her first, as she had to retire earlier. This was the last time he would see her for six years, for he was leaving at early dawn.

She was in a varying mood ; fitfully gay, with intervals of earnestness beyond her years. It was a week now since her ride with Barath.

“Why must thou be away so long?” she asked him.

“Because, dearest, it is necessary that I should have a complete education in England.”

“Udai tells me that most students go for three years, or four at the most. Is not that sufficient? Why be absent from home longer than is necessary?”

“True, dearest; three or four years are sufficient for the bare studies. But my father desires me to learn something of other matters in England—her arts and ideals, her social life, even her political institutions.” He broke off suddenly and looked at her. “But this is too serious for thee!” He laughed to cheer her. “Why, thou wilt be married and gone away before I return; so I shall be quite forgotten by then!”

A strange look crept into her eyes; she seemed to gaze into the dim future. “The women of our house, as of thine, seldom marry before they are seventeen. They would, if they could, still choose their own husbands from among the noblest and best, as in the past. My mother told me that. Six years hence I shall only just be seventeen.”

She was silent and thoughtful awhile. She was sitting straight up on the divan, with the veil of her *sari* just reaching the chaplet of pearls on her brow.

“And how old wilt thou be six years hence?” she suddenly asked. She lowered her eyes to pluck away a loose thread from her gold-cloth slippers.

“Never mind that, dearest,” Barath answered, with a laugh, then as suddenly felt stricken with sadness. “Why, thou hast not called me thy brother these seven days!”

"I have a brother," she said gravely. "But say how old wilt thou be on thy return?"

"Oh, quite, *quite* old!" he replied merrily. "Twice as old as thou art now, and nearly three years more. Canst tell how much that will be?" He asked that mischievously; for, having learnt the multiplication table at ten, he thought that she would learn it somewhat later. Which showed that he had forgotten the childhood of Delini, or rather, being then but an infant himself he could have known nothing of it.

Suvona answered him. "Twice eleven, that is twenty-two; and three more, that is twenty-five. Thou wilt be nearly twenty-five when I am almost seventeen."

Barath looked at her in admiration. "Dearest, thou wilt be as clever as Delini! Fortunate am I to possess two such sisters."

There was a vague fear knocking at Suvona's heart. "Wilt thou find a new sister in England?"

"Perhaps. Why not? Besides my mother—peace be to her soul!—I have had Delini and thee. Then why may not others I meet be to me as Delini and thou? Could I be more fortunate than that?" He felt that quite earnestly. At his age, and to his heart, the present joy was sufficient—with no thought that the lapse of a few years more might alter his vision of life.

Suvona's thought was now of England. Vague, intangible, yet tinged with some subtle apprehension. "Tell me, what sort are the women there?"

Barath laughed. "How can I tell? I have only seen them in picture-books. There they are very nice and pretty. Those books are made in England."

"And I have seen them in real life once," Suvona answered. "My father took me to Simla last year. Yes, some of the women are pretty, very pretty. Yet I thought the prettiest were not the nicest."

"Why, dearest?" Barath asked in amusement.

"Because they talked and laughed with the men before everybody." Which of course to Suvona was revolutionary. "One of them even gazed at a man openly."

"Was he handsome?" Barath asked this in sheer merriment.

"He was."

"Perhaps they were betrothed," he ventured to suggest.

She shook her head. "She did not even know who he was. I heard her asking. Tell me, wilt thou meet many women in England?"

"Not many; I shall be too busy. After I leave college I may meet a few."

"And those few—wilt thou see them often afterwards?"

"Hardly. So that perchance not one could be a true sister to me." There was a vague regret in the thought. After all some sort of feminine influence was good for a young man, and his own inward instincts might well cry out for it.

Suvona brightened up. She smiled sweetly. "Thy parting thought must not be sad. If thou dost feel lonely in England, come back all the sooner to us. To Delini—and me." Then to cheer him, she added, "But I hope thou wilt find one woman in England to be thy friend. Just one."

"Young?"

“Yes, young—and beautiful. To be thy sister. Always.”

“I thank thee for the wish, dearest,” Barath answered tenderly.

He took her in his arms and kissed her good-bye ; once on the brow, and once on each cheek. She nestled in his arms, and lay quite still—though he felt her thrill when he kissed her the third time.

“Good-bye, sister, good-bye——”

She suddenly kissed him in return, broke from his arms with a stifled sob, and retired. Into the night. Into the darkness that alone can bring solace to the wounded gazelle.

At early dawn Barath set out on the journey that had been long contemplated, yet at the actual accomplishment was fated to cause in the minds of those he left behind a subtle apprehension distinct from that of the parting itself. In his own heart the feeling was more complex. He too had prepared himself for the parting, but at the moment itself when he was leaving the home of his childhood he dumbly felt all that a home signified—all the ties and associations that unconsciously grow up with us, which we do not even think of while they are burying their roots deep in our hearts, yet fully realise when the roots are all simultaneously and violently sundered at the moment of parting. It was these that supplied the element of regret in Barath's heart.

On the other hand, he felt that he was on the threshold of a new world. He felt as if for many years he had been approaching a new region, and now stood before it : a region that would arouse his wildest curiosity, would interest him, fascinate him, and perhaps appeal to his deepest emotions. And now the veil was about to be

withdrawn, so that he could enter with a joyous rush and see it all in a single glance. In the anticipation of that there was a sense of exultation in his heart, which, though it were improper to name and voice, it were impossible to stifle or even check.

And yet withal there was a vague fear in his heart, begotten of the consciousness of the supreme importance of the step he was taking. Its consequences would be irrevocable. The new region might take him all the quicker to his final goal—or ensnare his heart and turn him from the goal for ever. He had come to the parting of the ways, and must choose. True that he had already determined upon which to choose, but only at the actual moment realised its absolute severance from the other path. It might take him to his goal, or its antipodes ; or worse, take him to neither, but make him circle between the two in eternal suspense.

“ I have launched my bark upon the bosom of the deep, come what may ”—the words rose up to his lips. He bowed his head, and began his journey.

His father came with him as far as Bombay, but was silent in the train, fearing to shape his thoughts into words. Then even as the bell was ringing for friends to depart, he spoke his last message.

“ My son, I am sending thee to England because my judgment so bids me, not my heart. Anything may happen in the six years, to thee—and to me.” He lowered his voice almost to a whisper to disguise a tremor. “ Dost remember thy mother’s last word, her last hope ? Fulfil it, if such be thy destiny ! ”

As he was about to leave for the shore he said, “ Remember the honour of thy house. Remember thy mother’s last word ! ”

He laid his right hand upon his son's head, and Barath, placing his own upon it, answered, "My mother's last word and first ! So inspire me, Vishnu !"

When the ship was moving away Barath still gazed upon his father, who stood on shore before his retinue, now cold and austere. At a quarter of a mile, when vision was failing, Barath caught a glint of metal in the sunlight. With his long Rajput sword the ruler of Barathpur was bidding him farewell. His last farewell.

It was something more. He raised the sword aloft, and kissed the hilt. The supremest homage. He would have denied it to any man on earth. He accorded it to his son, at the last instant that his eyes beheld him. He too had launched his bark upon the bosom of the deep, come what might.

Then the sea rose up and came between them.

CHAPTER XII

THE AWAKENING OF THE EAST

MOST of the passengers in the ship were English officials of varying ages from twenty-five to fifty, some returning to England on their first furlough, others on their final retirement. A few mercantile men, and just a sprinkling of military officers, made up the rest.

Barath had no retinue, not even a valet: in the years of discipline it was expedient that he should live exactly like his fellow-students. He was in European dress. Also, he had none of the minor and unessential caste prejudices. Except that he could not touch beef or pork, he had no hesitation in having his meals with the other passengers. He was generally reticent through a natural shyness, and being but a boy the reticence passed unnoticed.

On land being hailed three days out from Bombay there was a stampede of passengers to the deck. Last of them came an invalid, brought up on a stretcher by two lascars. He was a young European, robed in a long black gown; his face of a waxen hue and emaciated. His sunken eyes gazed at the land and seemed to glisten. He was slowly dying.

Barath hastened to make inquiries. He learnt that the invalid was a young Italian priest. Ordained at twenty-four, he had been sent forthwith from Naples

to Krishnagar in northern Bengal, where an Italian bishop and a handful of priests had founded a mission. Knowing no language but his own, Father Zapponi had learnt Bengali, the language of the province, as indeed his duty demanded. But within twelve months, just as he was about to begin active work, he had been stricken down with a malaria of the most malignant type. There was a partial recovery, but no hope of a permanent cure except by an immediate return to his own country, where a mother and three sisters awaited him sorrowingly to nurse him back to health.

His comrades had entrained him at Krishnagar for Calcutta ; at Calcutta the Italian Consul had entrained him for Bombay ; at Bombay the Italian Consul there had put him on board the English ship. None of the passengers or officers knew Italian, and the only Indian language they could understand was Hindustani, not Bengali. Even the lascars knew only their own dialect, besides Hindustani and English—in a mongrel combination of which their officers addressed them. Thus for three days the dying priest had exchanged no word with any man.

Barath's own language was Hindi. But Hindi and Bengali are both descended from the Sanskrit, and are as closely allied—at least in the written form—as Spanish and Portuguese. Barath guessed that in the twelve months Father Zapponi could only have learnt Bengali in the written form, not the colloquial. He resolved to try a modified form of Hindi, using only Sanskritic words. To his joy the invalid understood him—with yet greater joy. Father Zapponi's glazing eyes shone with a new lustre. The two became friends forthwith.

Though he had little prospect of ever returning to Krishnagar, Father Zapponi was consumed with the zeal of an apostle. At twenty-five, notwithstanding the nature of his illness, he clung to the hope that he yet had his life's work before him. He spoke to Barath with enthusiasm. Yes, they had built a little church at the mission, the high altar of the purest Carrara marble sent as a gift by friends in Italy. And they had taught their converts to sing Palestrina! The Hindu population were tolerant; they even saw resemblances to their own religion—at which Barath nodded. In fact on the occasion of a procession of the Madonna several prominent Hindus had sent a beautiful garland of jasmine, champak, and lotus, saying that they too revered Durga, the World-Mother.

Barath was interested to learn that Krishnagar, the city of Krishna, was the seat of an Italian bishopric. Yet, after all, all paths led to the eternal circle; and this new path seemed to him but a slight curve from the main line. And there still remained Indraprastha, the true city of Krishna, built by himself; this other but a later creation, dedicated to Krishna many centuries after.

"Hast ever been to Krishnagar?" Father Zapponi asked.

"No, I have not seen the city of Krishna," Barath answered. "But perchance some day I may go to it, and dwell there for ever." He added that to himself, speaking his thoughts aloud.

Father Zapponi marvelled. The zeal of the apostle surged within him. Why should he not continue his life's work on his sick-bed? He thought that Barath had meant Krishnagar. He took out his breviary, which he always carried.

"See, how easy it is for thee to read Latin, or even Italian. The vowel sounds are exactly as in Sanskrit. Yes, we too have our Vedic hymns, and all else we may need in life. Here our morning hymn, here for the day—and here what one might say at the hour of death." And so on Father Zapponi dilated in his zeal, and loved the work.

The dying embers always flicker brightly before they are quenched in ashes. . . .

Six hours later the ship reached Aden. The agent came on board bringing newspapers, letters, and telegrams. There was a slight commotion among the passengers, which their innate reserve soon caused to subside. But a single word had fastened itself upon Father Zapponi's hearing—"Crispi."

"Tell me, what do they say of Crispi?" he asked Barath. "For twelve months I have had no news of public affairs in Italy."

Barath tried to evade an answer. But a strange fire now burned in the sick man's eyes. He would not be denied.

Then Barath told him, as tenderly as he could. Crispi, seeking to imitate the other great Powers, had tried to extend his country's influence and had entered into a war with Abyssinia. In a preliminary battle the Italian army had been defeated. Reinforcements were now being sent to Massowah, as a large portion of the army was incapacitated by sickness.

Coming after a moment of enthusiasm, the effect of the news upon Zapponi was particularly adverse. He had younger brothers and cousins, of the age of twenty and upwards, all liable to conscription. In a foreign war the young men would be the ones sent

to the front. For the next few days a species of mental fascination kept him on deck most of the time. The steamer entered the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, now literally the gate of tears, and passed into the Red Sea almost within sight of Massowah. There was a crowd of hospital-ships returning, within sight, but beyond hail—which served to inflame the sick man's imagination, without appeasing it.

A few days later the steamer entered the Suez Canal, and passed through half of it. Then an accident happened. Just as it was about to emerge into the Bitter Lakes, a strong tide from the back caught the ship, swung it round, and sent it aground by the side of the Canal.

Frantic attempts were made to get the ship off with the aid of stout hawsers tied to immovable posts on shore, and worked by the ship's steam-winchcs. To no avail; the hawsers parted; the ship sank back into the sand. There was nothing more to do except to wait for the next strong tide. Meanwhile the vessel was made fast to the side, as it was blocking up the traffic. Thirty ships had collected at the mouth of the first Lake, awaiting their turn: most of them English, containing passengers returning to India or on their way to Australia. They were arranged in two lines, leaving a space between. Beyond them there were eight Italian transports, conveying 13,000 troops to Massowah. It seemed that they had the first right of way.

They crept down in a file along the avenue of ships at the regulation pace of four miles per hour, with a gap of a cable's length between the successive transports. They were packed with troops, about 1700 to each, who sat on the bulwarks, stood on the riggings,

and along every inch of vantage ground on deck. They gazed on either side at the passengers crowding the decks of the avenue of ships not fifty yards away. Not a voice was heard. They might have expected the passengers to say or do something ; but there seemed no reason why the latter should do anything more than merely look. Yet, since leaving Europe, the troops now saw for the first time a considerable body of Europeans—and might have vaguely felt that these five thousand English men and women would be the last vision of Europe they would ever see. In age most of them were but twenty—just Italian boys who were at play yesterday in their villages beyond which they had never strayed, affectionately called “tenori” by their fathers in the hope of an ultimate destiny at Milan, which was about the limit of their geographical vision.

And now they were going to a strange country, possibly peopled by cannibals.

Apart from the passengers' natural reserve there seemed to be a want of some tangible cause to induce them to express themselves. More than that. If they were to be quite candid the expression would not be altogether complimentary. Most of them were living and working in India amid a population outnumbering them in the proportion of a few thousands to one. The prestige of England before the world was their highest safeguard, but next to it the prestige of Europe before the Eastern world. A European Power had no business to go to war with an Oriental foe without immediate and signal victory. Begin with the defeat of Italy by Abyssinia—and the reversal of motion between the East and the West might pass on to other regions.

They felt a deep resentment against Crispi personally. Against Italy very slightly, almost imperceptibly : just sufficient to strengthen them in their reserve. Thus the 13,000 Italian boys gazed at the 5000 English men and women, and the stillness was great.

Barath was standing by the bulwark between the main-deck and the foc'sle as the first transport approached him. Hearing a sound behind him, he turned swiftly. Father Zapponi had staggered up from the stretcher ; just one reeling step and he would be by the bulwark. Barath sprang to his side and caught him in his arms. He turned the priest a little to the right so that he could see the approaching transport, and supported him with his left arm.

Zapponi's eyes were fixed on the transport in a glassy stare. It was entering the narrow channel beside the grounded steamer and within four yards of it. A hundred feet away, eighty, sixty—the sea of faces on the transport crept nearer. The whisperings on either vessel had subsided, and all were intent on looking. The stillness was great indeed.

Then something snapped in Zapponi's heart ; a thin film formed before his glazing eyes. The supreme effort he had made to rise had sapped his strength. Barath felt a dead weight on his arm. He saw the quivering lips, and bent his head.

"They are going to their death, to their death ! My God, give me tears !" Barath faintly heard the words, and something stirred in his own heart. The relief of tears was denied to Zapponi.

Barath heard a voice in his ear—no, not Zapponi's ; but the voice he had sometimes heard in his childhood. It now prompted him to do something—he

knew not what. He gazed at the Italian boys going past four yards away, most of them scarcely older than himself. Something surged up in his heart and to his lips—and would not be denied. He shot up his right arm skywards, and shouted—

“Evviva l’Italia ! Evviva l’Italia !”

The spell was broken. The seventeen hundred troops threw up their red caps in the air and shouted with one voice—

“Evviva l’Italia ! Evviva l’Italia !”

The cry passed from transport to transport, and swelled to a roar as each came before Barath. They may have mistaken him for a Colonial Italian bronzed by the sun, perchance returning from the front with the sick priest.

What mystery of fate was this ? Barath might well have rejoiced at the defeat of the West by the East ; instead his dominant feeling was one of compassion, not of triumph. Nevertheless was he inconsistent in first begetting that cry—in shouting for war, whereas his destiny might yet be to become the world’s apostle of peace ? Why not ? Why should he not cry for the long life of Italy ? To him and to the world Italy meant something more than the triumph of war. He had just heard of Palestrina—and that alone sufficed ; for Palestrina and his forefather Gregory had first begotten in Europe its noblest attribute, the one thing in which it was really superior to Asia. Yes, he would cry, “Long live Italy !” That would be his first greeting to Europe.

Thus the thirteen thousand Italian boys went shouting to their death at the call of this Hindu boy. Why not ? Krishna himself had exhorted Arjuna and his warriors

on the day before the great battle of the *Mahabharata*. Had exhorted them to die nobly, saying that for a warrior the finest end was death on the field of battle.

Yes, the thirteen thousand went to their death. Zapponi's last vision was fulfilled, though he knew it not. A fortnight later the whole Italian army of twenty thousand was defeated at Adowah by the Abyssinians, and almost annihilated.

Meanwhile the grounded ship was floated; after a week's delay it continued its voyage to Naples. Zapponi had been slowly sinking. His one hope was to hold out till he saw his country again, saw his mother and sisters who would come to meet him. The very intensity of the desire to hold out caused a reaction when land was sighted, and he was informed that the ship would be in the bay in three hours. He fainted. Barath stayed by him.

On regaining his senses he looked at Barath, but could not speak.

"One last favour, my brother!" Barath bent low to hear the whispered words. "When I am dying read my breviary at the page marked."

Barath bowed his head.

Soon after Zapponi was brought up on deck—to the promenade deck, where there were railings, not bulwarks, so that he could see better. The glorious vision of Naples, reposing at the middle of the bay and bathed in sunshine, burst upon him. Barath propped him up in his arm. The dying man stretched forth his hands to the city, like a child asking for a glittering gem.

"Napoli, Napoli—my beautiful Napoli!" the words

broke from his lips, uttered in his mother-tongue. Even as he spoke there was a constriction at his heart, a spasm at his lips. "Italia—my unhappy country!"

Then a sudden fear burst in his eyes. He tried to kneel. Barath himself knelt behind him to hold him better.

"Oh, what do I say? I think of my country, not of my God! *Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei.* . . . Brother, read the book—I am dying!" His head sank upon his breast.

Barath opened the book with one hand at the place marked. The meaning of the words he knew not. Some subtle instinct surged within him; some voice whispered in his ear, telling him that this indeed was the beginning of his mission.

"*De profundis clamavi ad te Domine!*" he read on his knees. "*Domine exaudi vocem meam!*"

Thus hearing the last words of comfort of his faith read to him by this Hindu boy, the soul of Zapponi passed to its Maker.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LESSON OF ADOWAH

LET us review affairs in India, Barathpur in particular, in Barath's absence, just to understand the stupendous nature of the task Fate demanded of him.

The results of the Battle of Adowah were far-reaching, and of all Europeans the one man who at that time saw them the farthest happened to be an Englishman, Coventry Patmore the poet. Among a few intimate literary friends he revealed his thoughts, which in time reached the press. But, strange to say, his anticipations aroused no interest in Europe—and but for this mention might yet pass unrecorded.

Not so in Asia. First, in Japan: the vigilant eyes of her public men missed nothing. They had indeed seen for themselves the possible results of Adowah, but their foresight was confirmed by Patmore's deductions. Japan had just vanquished China, but was robbed of the fruits of victory by a coalition of European Powers. After the lesson of Adowah she resolved to prepare for the future, lest she be robbed again. She had already sent a host of young men to Europe and America to learn the secret of material success. Now she went farther: she sent forth another band to learn their lesson so well that on their return Japan would be independent of Europe for the very tools

and instruments of material progress. Nine years after Adowah the foresight of Japan was rewarded—and in the fall of Port Arthur Patmore's vision was fulfilled.

Secondly, in India. The lesson of Adowah manifested itself in a diametrically opposite direction. It destroyed the last vestige of Beaconsfield's scheme of 1877, which had already been vanishing from Britain's high policy since Beaconsfield's death. In creating Queen Victoria Empress of India in 1877 he had in mind a magnificent scheme by which the last memories of the Mutiny would be buried for ever, and India would be bound to Great Britain not only by the ties of loyalty, but by the greater bonds of affection and patriotism; for India would be made to feel that she had a stake in the British Empire, and was to share alike in its perils and its triumphs. Seeing the great strength and prosperity of Germany since the creation of the German Empire in 1871, Beaconsfield sought to do likewise with Great Britain and India. Even as the ruler of Prussia became the central Sovereign of all Germany, so in like manner, though undoubtedly in a greater degree, the Sovereign of Great Britain (including its Colonies), who was also the direct Sovereign of British India, should now be the Suzerain of all India—and yet reckoning at least the greater ones among the Rajahs as "friends" and "allies," with complete Sovereign rights in their own kingdoms. To safeguard their position as such—which indeed was expressly enacted in their original treaty with the British Government—Beaconsfield insisted on the maintenance of their treaty rights as "Sovereign Princes."

As regards the people of British India he appealed, successfully, to their loyalty and devotion for the Empire by bringing Indian troops into Europe—just to show to a great menacing Power that India was not a source of anxiety to England, but a tower of strength. Successfully, because Beaconsfield's action aroused an enthusiasm in India for the British Empire which only the most culpable negligence could subsequently convert into sedition.

Beaconsfield died, and his scheme was forgotten. Nay, more: the unhappy opinion began to spread in India that the very terms of Queen Victoria's first Proclamation after the Mutiny had not been kept by her ministers, were never intended to be kept. A political agitation was begun, primarily in Bengal, afterwards elsewhere, for the restoration of those terms, and was maintained in the Indian press. It was opposed by the Government and the organs of the European residents in India. A mountain of rage and calumny was piled up—on both sides. Violence begot violence. The evil would have been less had it been confined strictly to politics. But an English writer arose, a mere youth, who wrote stories in the English papers in India heaping contempt upon the people of Bengal generally, as being the prime movers in the political agitation. The Bengali writers retaliated with fiction in another form.

Still the evil was not irreparable: the Indian writers and speakers still kept their eyes on the press in England for hope and support. But just then the youth came out of India like a meteor, and burst upon the English horizon. He became the prophet of England, aye, of Europe. And the press of England, taking his writings

For guidance in all matters Indian, forgot to differentiate between his later and maturer works and the irresponsible outbursts of his youth. In the press of England the condemnation of Bengal was severe indeed.

The breach was now complete. Stung to the quick, half the people of Bengal took to sedition. They remembered that it was Bengal that had first saved India for England—a fact which no English historian has yet found occasion to record. That is a stupendous thing to say, and I say it quite calmly—as calmly as the other stupendous things I may have to mention some other day. Yes, it was Bengal that saved the cause of England at the Mutiny; the Sikhs and the Goorkhas came long afterwards to the rescue of the British. Two months before the Mutiny actually broke out between Delhi and Cawnpore, the army in Bengal was ready for revolt. But the landed gentry throughout Bengal refused to give one iota of direct or indirect support; and the peasantry, following their masters, did likewise. So not a single shot was fired in battle in Bengal, and the Mutiny was mainly confined to the area between Delhi and Cawnpore. It was worst in Oudh where the landed gentry sided with the Mutineers. The people of Bengal, aye, of India, had not forgotten that fact—and the new prophet of England prevented the press of England from ever learning it.

Then came Adowah, and the result was more subtly dangerous. The Indian Government and the English papers in India accepted Coventry Patmore's general anticipations, or had independently come to the same conclusion. Applying the lesson of Adowah particu-

larly to India, the Government saw that if any possible danger could insidiously arise, it would probably be in some of the States of the greater Princes. It resolved to strengthen its hold upon these States in two ways. First, by introducing a few British institutions—which in themselves were beneficent. Thus the States would in time conform to the methods of administration prevailing in British territory. Secondly, by modifying the personal relationship between the Prince and the British Government, in several ways.

First, the education of the heir-apparent was to be more thoroughly English, so that the influence obtained in the most impressionable period of his life should bear fruit in later years. The English education in itself might also be an advantage to the Prince. But further: when a ruler died the succession had hitherto been determined solely by the house-laws of his dynasty; now the sanction of the Government for the ultimate selection became necessary. Nay, the installation of the new ruler was supervised and carried out by the British Resident. Further, the British Resident had formerly been an ambassador at the Court of the Prince; now he was an adviser. But the advice he gave had to be accepted, otherwise the ruler might be guilty of misgovernment—which sometimes he indeed was—and would have to be replaced by some successor who would be more reasonable if only out of sheer gratitude for his elevation.

In all this there is no adverse reflection on the political principles of the able statesmen at the head of the Indian Government. If you grant their premises, you must grant everything else. They saw that it was indispensable to maintain England's prestige

before the Rajahs—indispensable not only for the sake of England but also for the sake of the Rajahs themselves—at least for material advantages. Any little scruple regarding sentimental considerations was unimportant.

Unfortunately sentimental considerations are very important in India. Take away a district from a Rajah's territory, but grant him one more gun in salute, and he will be pleased. Rightly or otherwise the suspicion crossed the minds of the Rajahs that ~~their~~ former position as friends and allies as guaranteed by treaty was at an end; henceforth they were merely vassals.

The case for the Imperial Government was quite definite and intelligible. The treaties had been made in the days of the East India Company as between equals; for at that time the Company was but one among several Sovereign powers contending for existence in India. Since then the position had entirely altered, and the Imperial Government, the successor to the Company, was now unquestionably the Paramount Power in India—a relative position not anticipated at the time of the treaties. Hence it was reasonable to modify the interpretation of the treaties according to existing circumstances.

In answer the case for the Rajahs was equally definite. It was these very treaties which enabled the East India Company to rise above its former co-ordinate position and become the Paramount Power: the treaties secured to the Company the friendship and alliance of the contracting Rajahs while it vanquished the remaining rulers in succession. Nay, more: the heirs or assignees of a contract could not claim anything

more by the contract than the original party to it, be they the lords of the earth in all other things. The Rajahs inwardly felt that their treaties were as sacred as the Treaty of Amiens or the three Treaties of Paris, even though they were beyond the cognisance of the Hague Conference. Unfortunately there was none to point that out after the death of Beaconsfield. Thus it came to pass that Beaconsfield's "Sovereign Princes of India" became the "Ruling Princes of India," and ultimately the "Ruling Chiefs of India"—including the descendants of the demigods who had reigned as kings and emperors for thirty centuries.

Undoubtedly some of the changes in the position of the Rajahs here recorded had begun before the Battle of Adowah, but the most revolutionary of them came afterwards. Yea, a Prime Minister of England was found capable of putting words into the mouth of his august Sovereign sanctioning the new attitude: in the Address from the Throne at the opening of Parliament at that time Beaconsfield's "Sovereign Princes of India" were mentioned as the "Ruling Chiefs of India."

Let us consider the case of Barathpur in particular. Its relation to the Imperial Government was based upon the Treaty of 1818. At that time the East India Company was one of the three leading powers in India, the other two being the Maharatta and the Sikh. Barathpur, among a few others, was a sovereign kingdom, independent, self-sufficing, exclusive, having no concern in the triangular duel enacted in the rest of India. It had never come in contact with the Company, friendly or hostile, as it was far removed from the territories then under British control. Then

the Company proposed to Barathpur, among a few others, a treaty of alliance, which was accepted. It still prevails, as no occasion has arisen to break it by war, revolution, or otherwise.

The treaty had two essential clauses. First, Barathpur was to dismiss all Europeans from its service, and never to have dealings with any European Power except through the Company. Second, in return for the first, the Company would help to defend Barathpur against any attack from a European foe or any other

The reasons for the two clauses were remarkable. The Company still had a foe it dreaded. In 1818 Napoleon was in St. Helena, but not dead; and St. Helena might be an Elba. After his failure in Egypt, Napoleon had sent to India three of his generals, Allard, Court, and Ventura, to train the armies of the leading Rajahs—possibly in contemplation of his own visit to India in due course in the footsteps of Alexander. So Barathpur had a magnificent army of 50,000 men, disciplined directly or indirectly by Napoleon's officers. But in accordance with the Treaty of 1818 Barathpur dismissed the Frenchmen, and because of the guarantee against aggression reduced its army.

A British Resident was admitted to Barathpur, but purely as an ambassador; in the intention of the Company his chief duty was to report the arrival of any Frenchman in Barathpur. None came. In after years to detect the possible emissaries of another European Power nearer to India than France.

That was the treaty. But in later years mining, railway and other industrial concessions in Barathpur were obtained on behalf of British capitalists—which indeed were of the same nature as similar concessions

in China, and did not affect the rights of sovereignty. The duties of the Resident, however, became more numerous thereby: he was now consul as well as ambassador.

That was the thin end of the wedge. So thought Vashista, the High Priest of Vishnu.

Here again, in justice to the Imperial Government, it may be admitted that there was no original intention to change the status of any reigning Prince. But in most States new factors arose, chiefly economic, which had to be considered in the interest of the State itself—and in the consideration subtle changes inevitably, though unconsciously, followed. Prevision is a superhuman attribute, and in the fierce turmoil of administration the most honourable of men must still be human. Collateral and subsequent results from the subtle changes might ensue which were never contemplated, perhaps never desired—which yet could not be ignored when they were accomplished facts and had created vested interests. That was Vashista's fear regarding the future of Barathpur.

So far I have tried to expound the case for the British Government against its accusers. I have done so deliberately lest in the future course of this book an accuser should arise against whose charge I could find no defence.

The High Priest's apprehension was that once changes were permitted in Barathpur not contemplated in its original treaty, other variations might follow detrimental to its position as a sovereign State.

"Fear not, my brother," Viswa-mitra told him gently. "Trust England. I know her."

"I do not—which may be my misfortune," Vashista

answered. "And if I knew England, and so trusted her, I must still judge by what I see in Barathpur. And the things I see coming disquiet me and sadden me. I must prepare against them. I say that in sorrow, not in anger. England must take the responsibility for all things done in her name, even though she knows not all of them. Did she know of the thousand and one perfidies of the East India Company that caused the Mutiny? Assuredly not. Did she know even of the perfidy of Jhansi? Most assuredly not, for she would never have permitted it. Yet the perfidy was consummated—and will ever haunt the memory of every reigning Prince in India."

For the very suggestion of parallelism with the case of Jhansi will ever continue to be perilous: the suggestion that a treaty could be made in one sense, and interpreted in another. Jhansi had made a treaty with the Company as between equals. Then its king died sonless, and the Company annexed the kingdom on the ground that it had lapsed to it for the want of an heir—thereby implying the relationship of sovereign and subject.

Vashista resolved upon a course of action far-reaching in its effects. In the nineteen years since the birth of Barath he had studied European history; above all had been struck by the parts played by the great Churchmen of Europe in making the history of their times: Richelieu, Mazarin, Stephen Langton, Alberoni, Hildebrand. Not in that order; oh no! In his inmost heart Vashista would rather be an Alberoni. A parallelism with the others seemed less applicable. Yes, he would be an Alberoni—and make his master.

To prepare, perhaps many years in anticipation,

against what he foresaw was coming, he persuaded the parents of the cleverest youths of Barathpur to send their sons to the West to receive an education that would specially train them for the service of their State. Vashista of course knew of the Japanese youths who were then flocking to Europe to train for the service of their country; and though there was no actual similarity between the needs of Japan and those of Barathpur, he yet came to the conclusion that the students from his State might well follow the lines of study selected by the Japanese. Young men from British India often came to England to qualify for practice in law or medicine, about the only career open to most of them: in contrast the young men of Barathpur were to receive a technical training, how to make and use the instruments that had built up the material greatness of Europe. One youth in particular was to specialise in the use of iron, the substance upon which a nation depends for its greatness—in peace or war. He was to learn how to make pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares—or the great big things of iron used for purposes other than those of peace.

The mine was laid. Did Vashista intend to fire it in due course? Not necessarily; nay, he earnestly hoped that the occasion would never arise to force him to do so. Every important harbour in Europe is sown with mines, of which not one in a thousand will ever be used; but it is best to be prepared for the worst, whilst earnestly hoping against its happening.

The Battle of Adowah began a new epoch in the history of this planet. Strange indeed that the revolu-

tion it implied found no general verbal expression in Europe till the Passage of the Yalu in the Russo-Japanese War eight years after—when it was declared to be “a revolution in human thought” that an Eastern force could vanquish a modern European army. But the Passage of the Yalu was merely a corollary of the Battle of Adowah: the new epoch began at Adowah, not at the Yalu.

Stranger still that the awakening of the East, begun at Adowah and completed at the Yalu, conveyed no great practical lesson to the West. Even after the Yalu, aye, after Tsushima, with the insanity that the gods send before a great chastisement, the nations of the West began to exclude all Asiatics from their territories, whilst themselves insisting on the “Open Door” in Asia: exclude them not because of their moral inferiority, but because of their moral and economic superiority—because they were more industrious, more thrifty, more peaceful, more sober.

Thenceforth the British Indian in South Africa, the Chinaman in California, and the Japanese in Vancouver began to feel that there was something in common between them. What was more, they began to realise that their exclusion was in reality a confession of decadence—that the virtues of industry, thrift, and sobriety had departed from the West—aye, the old Roman virtues had indeed departed, and the Roman populace was ripe for the sword of the Hun. Thenceforth the awakening of the East became the unification of the East.

What an irony of Fate! The East would have continued to slumber, had it not been rudely awakened by the West; to live and let live, had it not been

aroused to active resentment by the continued aggression of the West. And now, once awakened, it would not slumber again till the relationship of Asia and Europe was put upon a new basis—in which Asia was not entirely to give and Europe entirely to take: in which, if the destiny of Asia still remained in part in European hands, the fate of Europe might also in part lie in the hands of Asia. The hour was drawing near when Europe's encroachment upon Asia was to be checked, and the disquieting element was that the new adjustment might not cease at that—for after the check Asia might be tempted to reverse the eternal order of things, and be weary of being always the pursued, never the pursuer. Even the play-actor that is nightly killed for a salary might in a moment of impatience become the killer. So also the last sands of Asia's patience were running out.

East and West would meet, very soon: and the meeting might be all along the line, not in one peninsula, in one province. The meeting might indeed be in concord, not in conflict; but there were ninety-nine forces that might work for conflict, and only one appeal for concord.

There were ninety-nine temptations that might induce Barath to throw himself into the conflict, aye, become its vortex, and only a single inspiration to make him yearn for concord. What a stupendous destiny to possess that single inspiration—if it prevailed! What a transcendent destiny to avert the conflict of East and West, and change it into concord! For at this stage England's position in India is the condition precedent to Europe's position in Asia—and let England's position in India be untenable, and

Europe will become a vassal of Asia. If Asia once loses her passive mood, her active mood might be intense.

But let us see if Barath indeed possessed that supreme destiny.

BOOK THE SECOND

PREPARING FOR DESTINY: IN ENGLAND

CHAPTER XIV

ELLEN'S MOTHERHOOD

FOR nineteen years Colonel Wingate had awaited the coming of Barath. He had periodically heard the progress the boy was making in his studies, and on his part Wingate had planned and schemed, and had finally arranged all that Barath was to do in England.

Apart from his studies at Cambridge the youth should see something of the social life of England, and understand its ideals. Nine hundred and ninety-nine visitors to a country out of a thousand may see everything else in it, except its ideals: they do not really see anything—whether the country be England or India. Wingate desired that Barath should be the one exception out of the thousand.

He realised his own responsibility; for Barath's impression of England would inevitably bear fruit in the years to come. Yet with an innate delicacy he did not seek to make any impression upon Barath by studied means, but rather wished that he should understand and esteem the highest forms of English thought and English institutions even by inference.

Wingate's main task was to select or create Barath's opportunities.

He lived most of the year at Boscombe, quite close to Bournemouth, in a warm climate congenial to him after thirty years' residence in India. He had a house, with extensive grounds, almost within sight of the beautiful chine that gives to Boscombe its chief attraction. During the season, however, Wingate lived in his London house at Kensington Square, to keep in touch with his old comrades who were now spending their last days chiefly at the various Service Clubs. Being a bachelor, a niece of his kept house for him. There was a special tie between the two—the bond of tragedy.

Nineteen years before we met in India the pretty girl who was seeing the sights of the great Durbar of 1877 under Wingate's guidance; Lady Ellen was his sister's daughter. Thirty years before the Durbar he had loved and lost; then five years later his beloved had died, a friendless widow, appealing to him with her dying words to take care of her infant son for the sake of his old love. Wingate had loved the child as his own, had educated him, and in time had been rewarded by the satisfaction of seeing him gazetted to his old regiment which was still in India. There Ellen was affianced to the subaltern at the time of the Durbar, though the wedding was to be deferred till he obtained his captaincy.

So Ellen returned to England with Wingate after the Durbar, and lived with her parents. Three years later her fiancé cabled that he was coming with his battalion in a troopship, and had obtained the promotion so long awaited. Impatient to reach London, he left the ship at Plymouth and took the South-

Western express for the metropolis. Meanwhile, wishing to give her lover a joyous surprise by meeting him at Plymouth, Ellen started by an outward express.

Then there occurred that disaster the memory of which still lingers in many English homes to-day. The two trains collided, and were piled up in a heap. The rescuers extricated the dead and wounded, and laid them in a line. Ellen was unhurt, and had only lost consciousness. When she opened her eyes she saw her lover laid beside her, dead.

In that terrible shock she fainted. In the delirium that followed her life hung by a thread for many days. Long afterwards, when she was convalescent, she looked at herself in a mirror. Her hair had become as white as snow.

And Wingate had lost his adopted son. So Ellen came to live with him for mutual comfort; as his niece that was, as his daughter that might have been.

Sixteen years elapsed, and now at the age of thirty-eight she awaited the coming of Barath whom as a babe she had held in her arms. Her silvery hair was still abundant, and gave to her countenance an aura of nobility that no coronet could equal. But her face was still young, so that had her head been covered by a nun's veil she would have seemed to be but twenty-five. Yet in her eyes there came at times a yearning that lies beyond the period of girlhood.

To every woman worthy of her womanhood there comes sometime in her lifetime the craving for motherhood, often without definite perception, always inarticulate; a yearning that tugs at her heart-strings, bidding her do something to relieve it, though she knows not what; sometimes at any age, in most

instances between twenty-five and thirty. See old spinsters past all hope of satisfying the maternal instinct, lavishing their affection on kittens or canaries. Ask the Mother Superior of any convent if she does not watch for the awakening of the instinct in her young novices—to prolong their probation till the yearning has come and has been quenched, and where the struggle is intense and needs some slight comfort, to assign to the probationer such duties as would afford that comfort, such as the care of infant pupils if there be any.

In Ellen the instinct awakened five years after her hope of actual motherhood had been crushed in the wreck of the Plymouth train. She did not know what it meant; but having three elder sisters, when some of her numerous little nieces and nephews came to visit her she found an indefinable joy in administering to them, in heaping endearments upon some special little one. She became "Aunt Ellen" not only to the nieces and nephews, but also to their playmates. It was enough. Having experienced nothing deeper, her auntship was enough.

Barath arrived in London at the middle of April. It had been a mild winter, and the sun shone bright when the train reached Victoria. On alighting, he saw on the platform a tall man scanning the faces of the passengers. His grey hair was just visible beneath his hat, his moustache was white. His military bearing was unmistakable. Barath instinctively stepped towards him, offering both hands in Eastern fashion.

Wingate had hesitated a moment, as there might have been several young Indians arriving by the boat-

train. He took Barath's hands in his own, the four joined together alternately in the manner of the East among special friends.

"Let me welcome you to England," Wingate said, "as your father's friend."

But Wingate was to be more. He was to be in some sense Barath's guardian. The youth raised up Wingate's right hand and bent his brow upon it, saying; "And my guide, my teacher."

The old Colonel accepted the homage, for he knew that it was accorded as much to his age as to his guardianship. He was now seventy, and seeing the boy before him he felt that some special dispensation had permitted the fulfilment of his hope of nineteen years—to shape and determine Barath's contact with England. To make or mar his ultimate destiny.

"Come to your new home," he said to the boy simply.

Such was the meeting between the two. They drove almost in silence to Kensington. Once, opposite Kensington Gardens, then in its first bloom, Barath's enraptured gaze appealed strongly to his companion.

"I am so glad your first vision of London has been at its best," he said smilingly. "So much depends upon our first impression! I must take you inside the Gardens some other day."

"And they told me that London was very ugly!" Barath cried in surprise.

"It can be very ugly, at times, and in parts. But at those times you may not be in town; and the parts that are always ugly you may never see."

For Wingate took that as a symbol, and inwardly hoped that Barath would see only the fairest aspect of England

in all things. The only error in his judgment of that moment was not to recognise that to one of Barath's perception it was wiser to see different aspects, the beautiful and the ugly, in their due proportion. After all the error was not very material; for if Barath did happen to see the different aspects promiscuously, he should be able to deduce their right proportion. That is, if his perception was truly unique. . . .

In a few minutes more they reached the house in Kensington Square. It was one of the few old-fashioned houses then surviving, now pulled down and replaced by the inevitable flat; quite close to the house where Thackeray had lived. The door opened into a large hall hung with old trophies. As Barath entered, he saw standing at the middle a woman who was gazing at him.

For seven long years he had carried engraven upon his heart his mother's last words; for seven long years he had whispered them to himself in awaking and in the last conscious moment before sleep. "A woman with hair of silver, face of ivory, and heart of gold"—who would be a new mother to him. And now he saw her standing before him; in the moment that he first crossed the threshold of an English home. The words surged up to his lips, the words of greeting he would first give to her, the words he had rehearsed each morn and night—

"Mother mine—your son has come to you." He stretched out his arms and hastened to her.

And Ellen, hearing the words, felt something awaken to life within her heart—aye, some new instinct that sprang to life in that single instant, suffusing her soul with a joy indescribable. For sixteen years

she had been aunt to everybody, to her little nephews and nieces, and their playmates. But no tiny hand had ever torn away the veil of mere aunthood, no young voice had ever cried out directly to her motherhood. The instinct that had been first crushed in the wreck of the Plymouth train and for sixteen years afterwards had tried to revive—the instinct she had merely felt as a dumb craving which she knew not how to satisfy, but only to stifle—leaped to being at Barath's call, all the more intensely because of the years of restraint, all the more spontaneously because of the memory of that scene in Barathpur when she had held him in her arms as a new-born babe, laying her face upon his face.

“Mother mine—your son has come to you.”

Hearing the words, Ellen accepted her motherhood. She opened her arms, and took him to her heart, pressing her lips upon his cheeks and brow.

“My Dilkhusa, I have long awaited you! Dilkhusa—let me call you by your mother's word.”

Then Barath realised that this indeed was his new mother; for his own mother had never called him Barath, but Dilkhusa—“my heart's delight.” For seven years none had called him that, but now Ellen. In that instant the void of the seven years was filled up—the seven years coalesced into a second, and he resumed his sonship as if Koikai had been replaced by Ellen from the moment of Koikai's death.

Wingate, who had stood by silently, now felt that there was a new tie between him and Barath. Men do not usually yearn for fatherhood, except the gods among men. And many years before Wingate had felt the yearning and had been accorded some sort of realisa-

tion by adoption ; yet after all the real tie between him and the child had been his own love for the child's mother. In the case of Barath the feeling was more complex, which I cannot describe but can understand. Suffice it to say that the regard was in part based upon Barath's personality, in part upon Wingate's own anticipations of nineteen years and all that hung upon their fulfilment. In part also upon Wingate's love for his country. For he dimly perceived that Fate might yet make him the instrument of England's destiny in India—aye, of Europe's mission in Asia. . . .

And you, my English reader, pause and consider. There are seven hundred young Indian students in London : guideless, friendless, knowing no Englishman in his home. Falling back upon their own resources in a strange country, they gather together in lodging-houses—and talk politics : for where two or more Indians are gathered together there is nothing else to talk about outside their studies save politics ; and from politics comes discontent, from discontent sedition. These young men must come to England for their studies by the regulations governing public services in India, and the failure of the British nation lies in not providing one more Ellen and one more Wingate. For if there were one more Ellen and one more Wingate, there might also be one more Barath.

Let us see what Ellen and Wingate were to Barath.

CHAPTER XV

REINCARNATION

BARATH found some little difficulty at first in adapting himself to the ways of an English household. But with his own innate docility, combined with Ellen's exquisite tenderness and Wingate's old-world courtesy, he learnt in a few days the rudimentary lessons needed of him. He was not ashamed to learn; in regard to any matter in which he was ignorant he asked questions which, coming from any other person, might have been a little embarrassing, but in view of his obvious childlike simplicity were answered with parental solicitude.

To be quite sure of his conduct he would make a sort of examination of conscience each night before retiring. Going over to Ellen and sitting on the rug at her feet, he would ask, "Mother mine, was I right in this? Was I wrong in that? Tell me!"

Ellen was interested in his mental attitude, which seemed to be so different from that of other boys of nineteen. His mind was apparently divided into two compartments. The first seemed to be filled with the fanciful ideas and pristine innocence of a child of ten. In the second there was the searching inquiry of an old philosopher; the desire to know the why and the wherefore of life. Not continuously, but

at odd moments—in flashes of yearning. They were not directly manifested as a yearning, only that Ellen saw the joy or the disappointment in his face begotten by her answer.

“Never mind, dear,” she would say. “There is plenty of time yet for you to think of such serious matters.” For the questions he would put to her regarding his own conduct often implied a doubt as to the motives that had prompted the deed. She saw that the earnestness of life had already entered into his soul.

Wingate acted somewhat differently. He explained everything he could. There was a reason. In a fortnight Barath was to go to Cambridge for the commencement of the Easter term. There he would have tutors, who, while giving him all the attention they could, would still be comparative strangers to him: hence the element of personal sympathy would be absent at the beginning. And the initial contact of the Eastern mind with Western institutions might be of supreme importance. Wingate resolved that the first contact should be under his guidance.

In the intervening days he and Barath led a strenuous life, visiting the Houses of Parliament, the National Gallery, the Mansion House, and the other places of historic importance. In each case Wingate explained to him its bearing upon public life, the objects it was intended to fulfil, had fulfilled, or had failed to fulfil. Barath was intensely interested. He viewed them all with the keenest approval; being young and enthusiastic.

So Wingate showed him nearly everything possible in the brief time—except St. Paul’s and Westminster

Abbey. He merely pointed them out in passing, but did not take Barath inside. He felt that in matters even indirectly connected with religion he could not be too scrupulous. Which Barath at once understood with his keen perception, and revered his guide all the more for it.

Barath's first Sunday in England was memorable. Ellen and Wingate went to their parish church, which was quite close, and afterwards came home to take him to the Park. In the hall there was a bowl of primroses. Wingate handed one to Ellen, took one himself, and handed another to Barath.

"Will you wear it—if you care to?" he asked. "In the memory of our greatest statesman of this age? To-day is the anniversary of his death."

Barath placed the primrose in his buttonhole, saying, "In the memory of a true friend of India."

Ellen and Wingate saw several acquaintances in the Park. Barath was greatly interested: the scene was so unlike anything he had ever seen in India. He was charmed and delighted. Yet misgivings arose: could the customs of his own country and of England be both right, though totally divergent? Then his mental humility came to the rescue: that things he could not understand might yet be right.

A man stepped from the crush and came to them. Lord Melnor was Ellen's brother. He was in London for a few days, and, being a bachelor, was staying at his club.

"Delighted to meet you," he said to Barath, shaking hands warmly. "I shall hope to make your further acquaintance later on. You must run down to my place some day. It is not far from Cambridge."

On parting he turned to Ellen and said, with a laugh, "See that you make a thorough Englishman of him, and true blue!"

For Melnor was of the type of the genial, hearty Englishman, the soul of honour in all things within his perception, chivalrous when the call of chivalry was actually heard, the truest of friends when the obligation of friendship was apparent; aye, a generous foe when victory was attained. Yet utterly unimaginative; nay, regarding imagination to be a weakness rather than the divinest of gifts, the one gift that makes man godlike.

True that in a sense such men are idealists, as intense as the most imaginative of visionaries. But their ideals are thoroughly English. In the case of Melnor it was something more; he not only believed in England's mission to teach all nations, but also that they would gain more than they would lose if they adopted English institutions in place of their own. Which need not necessarily affect the destiny of a nation—unless it happens to be under England's control, with Melnor as England's representative.

What a contrast with Barath's mental attitude, or even with that of Wingate and Viswa-mitra! They had their own ideals, and yet could understand and esteem those of others.

Barath was firm in the faith of his forefathers; yet he desired to study the precepts of the faith of Ellen and Wingate. Indeed he had done so already from books, in anticipation of his coming to England; but now he saw with his eyes and noted in his mind. Whenever he was in doubt he did not hesitate to ask for enlightenment. With the instinctive delicacy to be

expected of them, Ellen and Wingate never sought to influence his mind ; and desiring to be just, they even qualified their answers where no such restriction was needed. Which was all the better, as it so happened. For, noting the qualification, Barath mentally removed it, and even *added* something in favour of their precepts.

The next Sunday morning he astonished them by expressing a desire to go to church with them.

" I wish to learn more," he explained.

They took him with them in inward gladness, but said nothing in going or coming. Barath also was silent and thoughtful.

In the afternoon Wingate took him to Kensington Gardens, as promised on the day of his arrival. A warm spring had forced the flowers a little before their usual time, and by the end of April the Gardens were at their best. Wingate finally came to the beauty spot—the flower-beds a little to the west of the Albert Memorial. Though not more than fifty yards from the street, they were so secluded by luxuriant trees as to appear to be in the heart of the country. The lilac and the laburnum were now at their fullest bloom, their fragrance filling Barath's nostrils. He was intoxicated with delight.

They sat down on a bench shaded from the sun. The sky was a perfect blue, with an occasional speck of white fleecy cloud. Barath looked up—a small white speck was creeping across the sky from behind the laburnum. Barath gazed, and something surged through his heart. A dim memory awoke within him, or rather a vague impression of something similar to the scene before him. A bare consciousness of having

felt the same sensation sometime in his existence, but not of the place nor time. With an involuntary cry he stretched out his hand as if to hold the recollection ; but it was gone after the first instant.

" I have seen and felt that before ! "

" There are laburnums in Kashmir," Wingate answered.

Barath shook his head. " I have never been to Kashmir."

" Then you may have dreamt of it. Perhaps even have seen it in a picture."

" Or in a former life ! " Barath said that hesitatingly.

Wingate glanced at him. " You mean that in a former existence you may have visited England ? "

" Or even have been born in it. It is conceivable."

" I have of course heard of the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation," Wingate said. " In fact I used to discuss it occasionally with Viswa-mitra. But I thought it somewhat incompatible with Christian ideas."

" And yet there is a great similarity between the two," Barath answered. " At least, so it seems to me." This he added in humility, though in his own mind he was quite certain.

The fact was, a great change had come to pass since the days of Wingate's conversations with Viswa-mitra, in the very attitude of each side towards the belief of the other. Moreover, Viswa-mitra himself had much to learn meanwhile from the High Priest. And Barath had been taught by both. He had also studied Christian ideals. He saw at a glance the points of similarity between them and those of his own faith.

Wingate had heard of the mutual change since he left India, but no tangible occasion had arisen to cause

him to reconsider his own views. Being mentally ~~just~~, and having already explained to Barath whenever necessary the Western aspect of various matters, he thought it but right that Barath should now remove any possible misconceptions of his own regarding this Eastern belief.

"Please tell me more," he asked Barath, quite simply.

The boy was embarrassed. "Sir, you do me honour in asking me. I am the pupil, you are the teacher."

"In this matter you are the teacher of your teacher," Wingate said. He knew not what he had said.

For the words of nineteen years ago had leaped to his lips; the words of the High Priest of Vishnu on the day of Barath's naming. At that time the words had sunk deep in Wingate's heart—moved by them, have we not seen him take the babe in his arms and seek to be his guide and guardian in England? In the nineteen years they had indeed faded from his memory. But now they sprang to his lips unconsciously.

Thus encouraged and admonished, Barath began:—

"This is the Hindu or Brahminical belief. The soul of man emanated from the Creator, and will return to Him. Meanwhile it may pass through various vicissitudes, and only when it has attained perfection will it be absorbed into the Divine essence. It is not necessary that a reincarnated soul should return to this earth; there may be other worlds, so that all the beings on this planet may be merely one particular section of created beings passing through one particular portion of their journey. Even of those who do return to this earth it is not necessary that any should be reborn as one of the lower animals. The sinner may be, as a just retribution; but even he may return as a man in a lower

grade than before. Similarly the just man may re-appear as a still higher type of manhood, or pass on to another sphere. In either case the rise or fall will depend upon his own karma.

“In that there is a great similarity with Christianity ; for the doctrine of karma is equivalent to the Mosaic maxim, ‘As thou hast sown, so shalt thou reap.’ A man’s individual karma is the sum-total of his deeds, good and evil, in his entire previous existence since emanating from the Creator. Hence if his present life is determined by that sum-total, it follows that any relative rise or fall in the next will be determined by the increment in his karma in this life—good deeds for a rise, evil for a fall.

“The Hindu belief does not limit the *forms* the soul of man may take in its successive migrations. All that is essential is that in the case of the sinner the next form will be *lower* in moral perception—which will carry its own punishment, for then the soul will be longer in its journey—in the case of the just man *higher*, so that his journey in search of perfection may be shorter.

“For instance, in the higher grade there may be a state intermediate between man and ‘angel’ (defining angel in the Christian sense) ; more than man, less than angel ; may be, not must be. One just man may go through the intermediate state ; another, higher in merit, leap above it. In any case this state is not necessarily to be identified with the spirit world of popular imagination ; beings in that state may or may not have power to manifest themselves to us ; the Hindu does not profess to know which. All that is essential is that in the higher grade various souls will pass through various higher stages, each according to its

merits, till perfection is attained. And even as 'angels' may fall, so also may a soul in such eminence. But even then it would not be lost forever, as Lucifer was lost. Its trials would only be increased by that fall; perhaps it would be set back several *avatars* if the sin be great. And even if it falls repeatedly, *there would always remain the possibility of repentance*, though in greater tribulation because of the previous enlightenment."

"A most comforting belief," Wingate commented. "Yet I do not see how it is consistent with Christianity."

"The Hindu and Christian beliefs seem consistent to me because they are not mutually contradictory," Barath answered. "In both there is a probation; in Christianity the probation is *apparently* limited to one life, in Brahminism to an existence of indefinite duration, which may be very long or very short. I say *apparently*, because in Christianity the probation is admittedly prolonged beyond the one life: at least by the Roman doctrine of purgatory."

"True indeed. I see, however, a real inconsistency. We believe that the Creator has endowed man with a free-will, to be saved or lost as he pleases. Whereas in reincarnation if the soul *must* complete the circle and attain perfection in time, there is no free-will."

"*Will* complete the circle, not *must*," Barath answered. "If the soul chooses to prolong its journey in tribulation, it may do so—as long as it pleases. We merely believe that being an intelligent creature it will ultimately turn—because of its free-will. In fact, far from being a denial of free-will, the Hindu belief is its apotheosis."

"One last objection. After repeated falls the soul

may cease to be an intelligent creature, may fall even lower than brute beasts. May it not then lose the perception necessary to turn ? ”

“ There still remains the doctrine of grace,” Barath replied. “ Yes, even as in Christianity. When karma has failed ultimately, there still remains divine grace—which means the restoration of that lost perception.” Barath closed his eyes in thought awhile. “ Shall I tell you more ? It is narrated that Krishna, the incarnation of the divinity, once exercised his grace through love even when not absolutely necessary for the ultimate rescue of a fallen soul. He did so out of love and reverence for his earthly teacher.”

Barath mentioned the incident, already recorded, as told to him by Moolraj : Krishna’s resurrection of his teacher’s son drowned in the sea.

“ I did not know that before,” Wingate confessed generously. “ You have enlightened me. I have only one more question to ask. I lived in India for thirty years ; but perhaps my perception was dim. Now a young English writer has suddenly arisen who apparently knows India thoroughly. He affirms that the ways of the Hindu are mysterious ; that his motives of conduct are inscrutable ; that it is impossible to predict how he will act under any given condition. Is that true ; and if so, how is it consistent with the Hindu’s belief in karma ? ”

“ That English writer is quite wrong,” Barath answered. “ Because of the very fact of his belief in karma—and reincarnation—the ways of the Hindu are as clear as a crystal brook ; of all people in the world his motives of conduct can always be known to a certainty—by those who possess that master-key to his mind ;

under any given condition it is as easy to predict his course of conduct as to foretell that a stone thrown up in the air will surely return to earth ; in fine, the Hindu is the exact antithesis of what he is supposed to be by such European writers—as indeed they unconsciously admit by contradictory statements in other works of theirs. Take the case of the new English writer you mention. In his rampant mood he writes stories depicting the ways of the Hindu as mysterious. But it is conceivable that on arising from what might have been his deathbed he will write a book showing that the Hindu's rules of conduct are entirely guided by his religion, wherefore as clearly defined as the laws of gravitation. That is the truth, not the other. During your thirty years' residence in India did you not find it easy to understand the average Hindu's conduct even on matters different from European customs ? For instance, you must have noticed the general practice, with but few exceptions, of abstaining from the slaughter of lower animals for food or other purposes—even when necessary for comfort, convenience, aye, personal safety ? ”

“ I did,” Wingate answered. “ And I attributed it to a feeling of compassion for fallen manhood that might perchance be dwelling incarnated in the brute beasts.”

“ In that you were right, sir,” Barath exclaimed warmly. “ Your perception was greater than that of the prophets of Europe. And did you see the servile, low-caste Hindu cringe for mercy, and when he realised that the cringing was futile suddenly change it to pride and cold dignity ? ”

“ I did ; often. I attributed it to the debased Hindu suddenly realising that in a future life his position and

that of the one to whom he had cringed might be reversed. But most Europeans would attribute it to fatalism."

"The Hindu's fatalism is in reality another form of his belief in reincarnation: the word Fate is always used in that sense—the sum-total of one's own karma. 'What is to be, is to be,' is not the true Hindu belief, as generally supposed by Europeans; rather 'everything will be changed hereafter: I but suffer for my own misdeeds.' The hope of future improvement, not admission of present helplessness. A single example will suffice—at the hour of death, the supremest hour in man's life. There never has been an instance of even a reprobate Hindu consciously dying what Christians would regard as an 'unhappy death.' Imagine the most hardened reprobate, sinning up to the last, accumulating crime upon crime. Then the moment he sees the hand of death upon him, and realises its inevitable decree, that instant his whole mental attitude changes. 'In this life I have been a failure,' he confesses in his inmost heart; 'I shall try to do better in the next, shall accept the pain awaiting me.' Such a frame of mind is not far distant from the Christian notion of repentance, though it be but a deathbed repentance.

"You will never see the reprobate Hindu die with a curse on his lips," Barath concluded. "Even in these fallen days notorious dacoits or commonplace murderers may be seen walking to the gallows in silent dignity. 'Mere apathy,' says the average English spectator, scanning the immobile face. 'Stoic indifference,' comments his more intellectual brother, noting the steadfast eye. 'Christian resignation,' answers the Brahmin, reading the inmost heart."

"So every Hindu is a Christian in the hour of death," Wingate inferred.

"Rather, every true Christian is a true Hindu in the hour of death and at all times," Barath answered.

And then—and then—having taught his teacher the profoundest wisdom of the East, he became like a child again; the other compartment in his mind assumed the ascendancy.

The sun was now sinking beyond the trees. Barath had often gazed at the sunset from the gardens of his father's palace. The association of ideas began to work subtly, from thought to thought, from emotion to emotion. Often at the moment of sunset he had felt a sense of sadness, almost of loneliness. The feeling now returned with redoubled force. He felt something in his heart that gave him pain, though he did not know its cause; some void or gulf; perchance a sense of loss. Yet the loss seemed intangible, for he tried to remove the sense of loss by identifying its cause: he could think of none. The indefinable pain continued.

Wingate heard him sigh. Yes, he too had once felt like that—when he had first gone to India as a subaltern. He understood.

"Come. The air gets chilly," he said gently. He knew that the first comfort should come from Ellen.

They returned home and went straight to the drawing-room, where Ellen had been receiving a few visitors. Wingate soon withdrew.

Barath went to the window overlooking the Square. The last streak of sunset was vanishing behind the trees and houses opposite. Barath gazed, and a lump arose in his throat.

Ellen came up from behind, and placed her arm around him. "Are you homesick, Dilkhusa?" she asked softly.

Then the tension of his heart gave way. At that touch, at that word, he understood the cause of his own pain. He kept back the blinding tears and tried to steady his quivering lips.

"You are my mother, this is my home"—was all he could say. . . .

A while after he saw a photograph in a frame placed upon the piano. He had not seen it before, as it had been placed elsewhere. Ellen noted his glance.

"A niece of mine," she said. "The photo was taken last summer."

It was of a young girl, about fifteen, wearing a large straw hat and holding a basket in her hand in which she had been gathering flowers. She was posed against the lower window of a country-house, from which one could lightly step into the garden. She was facing full out of the picture.

And Barath gazed at the picture. Even as he gazed his heart ceased its pain. But he did not know that.

That evening as he sat on the rug at Ellen's feet he made his usual examination of the day's doings. At last he came to something that he could not shape into words. He hung down his head and looked at the rug, so that his brow was only a span from her knees. She could not see his face.

"What is it, dear?" she asked encouragingly.

"It is—it is—about—the picture!" he stammered.

"Well, go on," Ellen said after a pause. She was inwardly amused to see his embarrassment. She understood the direction of his thought. "Don't be afraid to speak. I won't mind."

“Is it wicked to think—she may be—more beautiful than you?” he blurted out.

“What a strange boy you are!” Ellen exclaimed, laughing. “Of course she may be and is!” She stretched out her hands and drew his head to her knees. She glanced across at Wingate. A silent message passed between the two.

Then suddenly she became serious. It was not merely the call of her new-found motherhood; perchance also a dim perception of the new conflict begotten in Barath’s heart. She bent down her head and kissed him five times.

“Good-night, Dilkhusa. Once for your mother, once for Delini, once for Suvona, once for me, and once for —Nora. Good-night, heart of my heart!”

CHAPTER XVI

FRANCIS THOMPSON

THOUGH Barath began his first term at Cambridge in some trepidation, he was soon able to accustom himself to his new life. He faithfully followed the example of the other students in matters of routine and discipline, and also participated in many of their recreations. He was just like one of them.

He made some friends, among whom happened to be the son of his old tutor at Ajmere. It was not quite an accident that the two boys were at the University simultaneously. Barath received the following letter from his former tutor by the last mail arriving in London before his departure for the University :—

“ RAJ-KUMAR COLLEGE,

“ AJMERE, INDIA.

“ MY DEAR BARATH,—By this mail I am also writing to my son Robert. He went to Trinity last term, with an Exhibition from his school which will defray much of his College expenses. In that he has been as fortunate as hitherto. His education has cost me little, as all along he has won prizes and scholarships—to his advantage and mine. Without them I could not have afforded the education I am trying to secure for him.

“ I commend him to your friendship. He has only a vague recollection of India, as I had to send him to England when he was only five ; still he will be interested to meet you. I never had the happiness of being his tutor as I was yours. I was particularly anxious to train him when I subsequently heard of his success in school ; for it seems that he loves his father’s favourite study, mathematics. I had to deny myself that pleasure because I could not afford to keep him in India, whereas he was keeping himself in England by his scholarships. My comfort is that his mental training is in competent hands, so that some day he may excel his father.

“ The special tie between you and him is that he is my son, and you are my pupil. More : I long to see my son excel his father ; I long as much to see my pupil excel his master. Three years hence my hopes will be fulfilled or marred. As neither you nor he could be delayed through any deficiency, you and he will appear for the Tripos simultaneously. If he is the Senior Wrangler, my joy as his father will be great : if you are, my joy as your tutor will be no less. Yet to reveal my inmost heart I cannot help thinking that his need is greater than yours. To you one more glory is as nothing : to him it may mean the one chance of his life—the one chance of success where his father has failed. It is for that reason that he has gone to College as soon as his scholarship permitted—to have the fullest preparation possible. With cordial wishes and affectionate remembrance, your friend and former tutor,

“ CHARLES SIMPSON.”

In Barath's mind dim recollections arose of Viswamitra's words. Simpson had failed to obtain a fellowship at College, had consequently accepted service in India, and thus had been lost to fame in Europe. His last hope was that his son Robert should succeed where he had failed. The letter burnt itself deep in Barath's mind.

Hé and Robert started a friendship that was all the finer because they both felt that they were striving for the same goal. We shall consider the friendship again when in sight of that goal. Meanwhile they cultivated each other's society, and on parting at the end of the term arranged to keep in touch during the holidays by correspondence.

Lord Melnor invited Barath to spend the first few days of the long vacation at his country place, situated on the western border of Norfolk. Barath gladly accepted. Melnor, though only thirty-six, had already played a varied part in the public life of his country. He had begun in the diplomatic service, in which he had visited several of the Courts of Europe. Afterwards, he had entered Parliament in the Conservative interest and had specialised on Eastern questions—on which the ignorance of the House of Commons was somewhat extensive. Consequently he had been regarded as an authority on such matters, and was already marked for special use by his party in the years to come : possibly in Indian affairs.

His immediate desire, however, was merely to come into mental association with Barath. The boy had been set a holiday task by one of his tutors ; so he went to Melnor's place with a bagful of books. In the first few days Melnor took him out riding to several places a

few miles round, among others to the ruins of an old castle. It was mainly of the early Norman type, but there was one portion of the keep alleged to have been built in Saxon times as a protection from the Danes.

"Why, I have just been reading about that period," Barath exclaimed.

Melnor was delighted. "I didn't know you had taken up English History," he observed. "I thought you were going up for the mathematical Tripos."

"Indeed I have," Barath answered. "I must; it will be so useful. My father told me to read English History. The mathematics only because I love it."

"Don't you love English History also?" Melnor asked.

"Not yet!" Barath replied, laughing. "It is so tough! But I dare say I shall love it some day when I know more. I want to." This he added quite seriously.

Melnor naturally thought that Barath's "tough" reading was confined to the usual elementary text-books crammed full of dates and bare facts, that taxed the memory without awakening any interest, and therefore hated by the average schoolboy. His astonishment was great when in the evening he happened to see Barath's books. The first set was a modern rendering of some of the important parts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*."

"My history tutor tells me I must read through them in the holidays," Barath explained. "He says that I cannot understand English History properly unless I read them first."

"Quite right," Melnor admitted, turning to another volume. It was a copy of Stubbs' *Select Charters*, with an appended English translation of the medieval Latin.

"Oh, I am not supposed to learn that yet," Barath said quite joyfully, "but only to glance at it. My tutor is giving notes of the Norman period, and will deal with the Charters. They *are* tough!"

Melnor laughed. "I found them so! But let me have a look at the notes." He turned over the manuscript casually. "No wonder! Matthew Paris, Glanvil, Braeton! Poor boy!"

"But I have something quite nice," Barath cried gleefully. "Not at all tough; and very interesting. I might read it towards the end of the holidays; I have already done part of it."

Melnor saw that it was a volume of Taswell Langmead, well-thumbed at the description of a baronial household in the Middle Ages.

"Why, it reads just like an account of some Rajput domain to-day!" Barath commented. "So I find it very easy and very interesting."

"Then let that be the basis and first cause of your appreciation. I cannot tell you how delighted I am to see that you are studying our history so thoroughly; more thoroughly, I must confess, than even the average intelligent Englishman."

"It is a profitable study; in fact, it seems to me to be a necessary education for a ruler or legislator of any civilised community in the world. No, I am not generous, but merely just. Then shall I try to be just in all respects? You won't be offended?"

"I shall not," Melnor answered. He knew some criticism was coming, and naturally thought it was of a similar order to those already made by European commentators. "I can at least appreciate sincere criticism, even if I do not agree with it."

"Mine is not a criticism," Barath explained; "merely an inference. *England was made by foreigners*. Is that too startling? First, William the Conqueror, who laid the foundations of England's future greatness on Salisbury Plains. Second, Simon de Montfort, who gave to England the one thing which *made* her then unique among the nations of Europe, for which the rest had to wait till after the French Revolution. Third, Edward I.—ninety-seven per cent. of *whose* blood was foreign—who accepted Simon de Montfort's scheme and confirmed the previous Charters in legal form, thereby leaving nothing more to be done in future English history except to carry out and develop the principles already laid down. Am I right?"

"You are," Melnor confessed, with a smile. "Except that we now regard all three to have been thorough Englishmen."

"Which shows your great political wisdom!" Barath exclaimed. In that instant's flash he ceased to be the schoolboy, and became the prophet.

He might have gone farther than the three instances. He might have mentioned the Flemings and the Huguenots who built up England's textile industries, and thus laid the foundations of her present economic supremacy. Yea, still farther, coming down to our own generation he might have mentioned the English statesman who had the widest political vision of all his compeers and who was of Eastern origin!

Is there any disparagement of England in this? On the contrary, the finest compliment. It shows her wonderful adaptability; proves how wide are her meshes into which she draws all things, and selects those capable of moulding her destiny.

Shall I say more ? Then let me say that in the near future she may see the wisdom of enclosing another Eastern in her meshes, and selecting him to be the rebuilder of her Eastern destiny in the hour of peril. I mean Barath, yea, Barath—or even his humble disciple. Do I write in parables ? Then if you have eyes to read, you can read. . . .

After leaving Melnor, Barath set out for his guardian's country-house at Boscombe. He was in a state of excitement when he arrived in London. He was anxious to reach Boscombe as soon as possible. He felt that in some sense he was going home. He scorned to waste time in lunching, and jumped into a hansom forthwith and was whisked off to Waterloo Station. There he learnt that a train of some sort was starting in a few minutes which would stop at Boscombe ; but if he chose to wait an hour he would get an express. The difference in the time of arrival was very little, so he preferred to travel slowly all the time and see the scenery at leisure, rather than wait an hour at the station.

He went to the refreshment-room and ate a couple of scones in lieu of lunch. He travelled third-class just for the sake of company, and entered a compartment in which there were a few passengers of the usual City type, who were evidently leaving town for the summer holidays. Just before the train started a man hastened down the platform looking for a seat. All the other third-class carriages seemed to be crowded, for after looking into several he came to Barath's compartment, opened the door and stepped in. The other passengers glanced at him curiously.

His appearance was certainly strange. He was of

medium height, but very slight of frame, which made him seem taller than he really was. His cheeks were so sunken as to give undue prominence to a little grey beard that was pointed at the end but otherwise untrimmed. It was his garb that was against him, and in violent contrast with the traditional smartness of City men. His trousers were dark, too dark for summer, frayed at the ends, spotted with tallow marks—which might have been made by a farthing dip in climbing to a fourth floor up rickety steps at midnight. His coat was grey—and did not match the trousers—stained with tea at the sleeves. The greatest incongruity, however, was that he wore an ulster, though the heat was great. It had been originally brown in colour, but was now of several hues in patches.

There was no active resentment at his intrusion; the passengers simply ignored him after the first glance, and buried themselves in their newspapers. The new-comer stood diffidently by the door, as all the five seats on either side were taken. Now Barath had noticed his eyes, which the others had not: in fact, struck by them from the first, he had noticed nothing else. Whether they were light grey or blue he could not tell; it was their lustre, not their colour, that arrested his attention. As for his garb, Barath cared little; in India a Brahmin of Brahmins may trudge along the Grand Trunk Road in a sixpenny dhoti, and a prince of the House of Rama bathe in the Ganges among a crowd of beggars. But the lustre of those eyes, intensified by the contrast of the sunken cheeks and emaciated face, he had never seen in England before.

Where else had he seen it? He had a haunting memory that he had indeed seen it somewhere. Was

it in the eyes of Zapponi gazing at his countrymen going to their death ? Rather was it in the eyes of the ascetic who had sat thirty years in silence in wind and rain beneath the bodhi tree outside his father's palace—and then glancing up had found tongue and recited a new Bhagwat-Gita that had been taking shape in his heart for thirty years ? Perhaps both : racked in pain, in the eyes of Francis Thompson there was alike in that moment the gaze of the stricken Zapponi and the lustre of the Hindu visionary.

Barath silently arose and gave up his seat. In India it was an absolute moral law—which every youth was taught in childhood and had to fulfil as a mere matter of course—that the youngest must resign his seat if an elder were standing.

“Thanks very much,” Thompson murmured, “but I can stand.”

“Then I am afraid I must also—and the seat will be wasted !” Barath answered. He of course had not the remotest idea of the character of the person he was addressing. It was quite sufficient that he was older in years, the shabbiest garb notwithstanding : Barath had to act entirely from his own obligation, quite irrespective of the personality of the elder concerned.

Francis Thompson understood, though neither had he the remotest idea as to who Barath was : it was enough for him that the youth found cause to act in that particular manner, in accordance with some underlying principle. He accepted the seat in silence. Words were unnecessary.

Was this a trivial incident unworthy of mention in this chronicle ? In reality it was of great consequence.

For one thing, it showed that East and West do meet—when the contact happens to be on the highest intellectual plane, not the lowest.

Barath was not loath to stand awhile. When the train was passing through the heart of Surrey he caught a glimpse of some of the best scenery in England ; which set his mind thinking. Even at that early age he had acquired the habit of making deductions from the smallest observations. He presumed there might be other places in England as beautiful, if not more so. He had heard of some. Then he wondered why the people of this country were wont to go abroad for scenery when they had it near their own homes. Perchance it was not altogether for scenery that they went, though for what other reason he could not tell as yet. He wished to understand the English people, understand their joys and pleasures no less than their tribulations. Some day in the far future he might perchance have a larger mission, which would include not only India but in part England, perhaps in part Europe. The thought flashed through his mind as a vague possibility. He let it rest at that.

Presently some one alighted at a station and he found a seat. He took out his copy of Taswell Langmead and plunged into the detailed description of a baronial household in England in the thirteenth century. He was fascinated. Subconsciously, whilst he was reading of the past, his mind was weaving pictures of the present. He saw English homes and country mansions, and somehow felt himself familiar with their usages. He felt himself to be *within* the picture—perhaps in a room, or in the garden, or some central scene in which he was a participant, not an external observer. In

in this fashion his mind worked till the train reached Boscombe.

His home there was a new delight to him. Ellen and Wingate being out, as they did not expect him by the early train, he rushed to the garden. It was not yet four, and the sun was still hot, which to him was just perfect. He felt inclined to throw up his cap and shout, or run, or do something. He explored the garden, jumping over flower-beds from path to path instead of going round them, climbed a tree or two, plucked an apple and ate it—though it was August! For he was a boy again and ravenously hungry.

Meanwhile Ellen and Wingate had returned. They came into the garden, followed by the maid with the tea. Barath ran to Ellen and embraced her affectionately.

"Glad to see you back," Wingate said, warmly shaking his hand.

Then, as if Fate always intended to bring into juxtaposition moods and manners in antithesis, Barath's lightheartedness turned to seriousness. All through tea he noticed that the Colonel was wrapt in thought, ever and anon casting an anxious glance down the gravel-path which ran past the house in a line with the main road beyond.

"Yes, we are expecting a friend," Wingate explained. "Rather, one the privilege of whose friendship we hope to deserve some day."

"Sir, in possessing your friendship the privilege must ever be on the other side, not on yours," Barath said to him, but also included Ellen in his glance. He was aware of the Colonel's brilliant record in India, of which any man might have been proud.

“Not in this case, if ever,” Wingate answered. “I am here to-day and gone to-morrow, but this man’s work will last as long as the English language lasts—which itself will survive the wreck of the British Empire. Empire is nothing, art everything. The Roman Empire is no more, but Virgil still lives; Greece has perished, but has given to Europe its entire civilisation. So when the British Empire is forgotten, the works of Shakespeare and a few others will still charm nations.” The Colonel had never been in that mood before. Some strong emotion was stirring in his heart to make him speak his mind so definitely and so unreservedly.

“Many years ago, when I was in India in the prime of manhood,” he went on, “I read with Viswa-mitra the poems of Kalidas and Valmiki, and thereby felt the desire to read the works of my own countrymen; for, alas! in my youth my studies had been entirely concentrated on what was required at Sandhurst. Yes, I first read Shakespeare in India! Afterwards I yearned to meet men of letters, men of genius, on my return. But I met none. No doubt there are many literary men who may be living anywhere around me,”—he waved his hand in childlike simplicity, having heard that Keats once lived in Boscombe, which, combined with the fact that his own London residence was close to Thackeray’s old house, gave him quite a sense of literary propinquity,—“but I had never been fortunate enough to come under the notice of such men, till the special circumstances which led to my acquaintance with our expected guest. On my return to England I met, through a brother-officer, a man and a woman whose mission it was—so my comrade told me—not only to discover men of talent of our own day, but also

to revive the memories of those long dead whose genius had not been adequately recognised in their own lifetime. I thought it was a noble mission.

“ Then suddenly I heard of the rise of a new star in the firmament of English literature, a poet worthy to rank with Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats. He had been discovered by this man and woman in a manner that was almost miraculous. I shall not describe the discovery, lest I encroach upon the rights of others who will surely do so in due course and far more eloquently than I can. Suffice it to say that the poet, though of gentle birth, had been sunk in the direst poverty, had for five years been a homeless nomad in the streets of London, when two little poems of his written on pieces of waste-paper came under the notice of this man and woman, without the slightest clue to the identity of the writer. But the woman’s own poetic instinct supplied the clue : with an insight almost superhuman she reconstructed the environments of the writer from the internal evidence of the poems themselves. The evidence did not tangibly indicate his material surroundings, but was merely of the moral order : the half-uttered cry of a stricken soul, the half-quenched moan of a body racked in pain. From that indication she depicted to her husband the possible environments of the writer, and besought him to search for him—in the streets of London.

“ The search was successful ; in what marvellous manner I shall leave to others to describe. The poet was found and all his works—for, having nowhere to lay his head or the works of his heart, he carried them with him in the pockets of his frayed and mud-smeared overcoat. They were written on scraps of odd paper

picked up in the streets. The poems were published forthwith, and were at once hailed as the work of a genius of the first magnitude. Unfortunately there seems to be no room for poetry at present: we live too fast, and have neither the repose nor the desire for poetry. This poet received the honour due to his work, but nothing else. He preached his gospel in honour, but could not live by his gospel. Had he written a work of an inferior order he might have clothed himself in fine raiment. As it is, he remains only a trifle above his former surroundings. Indeed, literary employment of a humble order has been found for him, just to provide him with the barest necessities of life, but it is not of a congenial nature; moreover, leaves him no time for creative work. The days that might be spent in giving to the world immortal thoughts of his own are now employed in hearing the trivial mutterings of others.

“It rouses my old blood to think of it! Because of his past sufferings this man’s life is not worth ten years’ purchase—and there is not in all England a successful pork-butcher willing to buy immortality for five hundred pieces of gold. For that sum would suffice to buy an annuity which would provide this poet with the same subsistence he is obtaining at present, and would thus enable him to do his own creative work—whereby the memory of the benevolent pork-butcher would be associated with it forever. Not that the poet would accept any such offer if made directly to him, but I think means could be found to give him the benefit of it without his knowledge. My own associations with him have been of the most trivial nature and in no way connected with his work. Last year, when his

health was already shattered and a change of air was imperative, I asked him to do me the honour of coming to stay with me here for a few days. He came, and I am happy to say derived some benefit from the warm sunshine of Boscombe. So I have asked him again this summer, and expect him at any time. Unfortunately he has to be so preoccupied mentally as to be unaware of the flight of time; hours and days mean nothing to him. Why should they to him whose vision is limited by eternity itself? He can come when he likes, and we shall be honoured to have him with us all the summer. In us I include you also."

"Sir," Barath answered, "the friend of my guide is also my guide—if he so chooses. Apart from that, as a poet of the order you mention I can only say that were he found in my father's kingdom my father would have him sit at his right hand."

"True indeed!" Wingate exclaimed. "Even as Kalidas sat at the right hand of King Vikrama whom European historians call the Augustus Cæsar of India. Yes, I remember Vikrama's greatest boast—that Kalidas was his friend. I have a vague recollection that it was likewise with the King of Magadha and the King of Delhi regarding the poets of their day. Was it so?"

"It was," Barath replied.

"And we allowed this poet to become a cobbler and a crossing-sweep!" Wingate laughed bitterly. "So we are trying to civilise India to-day!"

"We have fallen since then," Barath answered.

He understood the Colonel's present mental attitude, which to a superficial observer might have seemed inconsistent with what it was at the time of Barath's

first arrival in England. In reality it was of the very essence of consistency, that is, of justice. At that time of his coming, being personally unacquainted with the youth, Wingate naturally hoped that Barath would experience all that was best in England. Now, realising Barath's mental equilibrium, he desired him to see all aspects in their due proportion.

Why not, my reader ? Let me give you a little hint. When an intelligent foreigner comes to you, treat him exactly as Wingate treated Barath. Show him all the good things you can ; but if a defect is likely to be made patent even by inference, be yourself the first to draw that inference, for then it will lose its sting. If you are forestalled and the question of the defect arises directly, then answer prettily, " Alas, it is too true ! " For then the admission that " it is too true " will make for your justice, and the regret implied in the " alas " will show that you love your country notwithstanding the defect. Do that always, and you will make many admirers of your country and yourself. . . .

Wingate had to wait till nightfall for the arrival of his guest. It seemed that with his usual mental pre-occupation—which, indeed, was a source alike of anxiety and merriment to his prosaic friends—he missed the right station, alighted from his train several miles beyond, and had to wait for a returning train to reach his proper destination. When he had taken refreshment, which he much needed after the long journey, Wingate sent for Barath.

" Come and welcome our guest," he said to the youth when he entered the dining-room.

Barath recognised the visitor in an instant, with some degree of surprise mingled with a vague sense of

pleasure. Yes, it was exactly as in the train, except that the hat and the overcoat were not in use now. The same lustre in the eyes as they met Barath's—but perchance that was merely due to the mutual recognition. Barath came with extended hands.

“Sir, I seek the honour of your acquaintance,” he said.

Thompson, meanwhile, had heard from Wingate that a Hindu youth had also come to stay there, but without further particulars: which proved to be unnecessary. Instinctively the mind of the poet seemed to understand that some of the elements in his own nature, hitherto vaguely perceived and only partially understood, now stood before him in their fullest embodiment; that though he was wholly an Englishman in the body, he was partly an Eastern in imagination—and now for the first time met one who was wholly Eastern in body and perchance in thought. Some time afterwards Thompson indeed learnt that Barath was not wholly Eastern in mind, but in part Western, and in that found the tie to be closer than ever, for the mind of each was thus mutually supplementary. Thompson instinctively took both hands in his own in Eastern fashion as offered.

“I am delighted to make your acquaintance,” he said to Barath—and afterwards wondered how he had said it.

For among the few acquaintances Francis Thompson ever made, however well he may have known and understood them subsequently, at the first moment of contact his sensitiveness, begotten of years of physical and mental pain, never permitted so direct an expression. The greatest friendship on earth may begin in mutual

silence ; in silent acquiescence, in an inarticulate acceptance by deed alone, though indeed in inward joy where there is cause for joy. In Barath's case, having first met him in silence in the train, Francis Thompson was impelled by some inward force to voice his pleasure in meeting him again in the house in which they were both to live.

And then having spoken, Thompson relapsed into silence. He took out his pipe, a huge briar, struck a match, gave just one puff, held the match over the bowl till his fingers were nearly burnt, threw away the match, struck another, also gave a single puff, relapsed into thought—and so on, with several matches. Afterwards Wingate picked up the burnt matches and counted them.

“Just fourteen !” he said gleefully to Barath. But then he wrapped them up in a piece of tissue paper and put them in his vest pocket. “God bless him, poor man ! I love him all the more for these little traits of his.”

That night Barath was sleepless ; the air was hot and oppressive. He arose and opened the window wide at the top. He looked at his watch and found it was past two o'clock. To let in some fresh air he also opened the door for a moment, and then stood still. Thompson's room was just opposite, across the corridor. Under the door Barath saw a thin line of light. A moment after it was obscured—just for a second, after which it was visible for seven seconds, and was again shut out. The occultation was repeated several times, almost with the same regularity. Thompson was slowly pacing up and down the room at that hour wrapt in thought.

Then Barath understood its meaning, and also the

meaning of the burnt matches. For five long years this man had tramped the streets of London in solitude, knowing no man. There is no desert like the desert of London, and in it Francis Thompson had lived a life of solitude greater far than that of the Carthusian, who at least has the knowledge of the presence of his brethren around him and is permitted to raise his voice in unison with them in prayer or praise. To Thompson his solitude had implied the stifling of his voice, save perchance in the midnight hour in some garret that gave him occasional refuge.

“Never did any milk of hers once bless my thirsting mouth.” The words trickled to Barath’s ear. No, it was not a complaint against the cruelty of nature and of fate, but merely a simple fact that had by long continuance burnt itself deep in the poet’s heart, and in the silence of the night formed itself into words upon his lips.

Barath crept back to bed in new wisdom. He had understood the heart of this man whose intellect was perhaps the greatest among Englishmen of his day, whom all England had failed to understand as man, not merely as poet—save perhaps a dozen men and women. Even they not always and in all things.

Is this too strong? Then hear me in patience, and you too will understand. It is worth your while to understand the things of England as well as of India. I am but a reed shaken by the wind, yet I too have my mission—which is to prepare the coming of my master, the New Krishna. Do I speak in parables? Have patience, my brother, have patience!

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF NORA

BARATH spent several happy days at Boscombe. He arose at six ; the house was usually locked in slumber ; so he came down to the garden " to eat the air " as the saying goes in India. Sometimes, scorning a cap, he would stroll out to the cliff overlooking the sea. This was a new sensation to him, as he had experienced nothing like it in India. He would watch the ripples on the sea in fascination. The gentle undulating motion, combined with the reflected rays of the morning sun, had a soothing effect upon him and awakened his subconsciousness ; with his Eastern temperament he would weave pictures and phantasies. Then suddenly breaking away from the fascination, he would rush to the adjoining pine forest, have a short run through its silent glades, skip down the slope on the town side and return home. After breakfast, if Ellen had any shopping to do in Bournemouth, which was only a mile away, he would escort her there along the cliff road and carry her parcels for her. And in the afternoon, if there were any messages to carry for Ellen or Wingate, he was always at their service. On such occasions, or whenever he happened to come out in the afternoon, he always had in his pocket some of his lecture notes ; for he had to do a few hours' study in the afternoon, and found it inter-

esting to dip into the English History notes sitting on the pier or the seashore surrounded by the multitude.

In the evening he worked at mathematical problems for a couple of hours, as they needed a greater concentration. But the hour before retiring to rest he always reserved for some special study : something that pleased him, or interested him in a peculiar manner for the moment ; even perhaps something that chastened him and sent him to bed in sad wisdom. For he knew that a man's last conscious thoughts at night continued their development in sleep, and perhaps permeated his very soul ultimately. So he sought to define the channel in which his mental acts must run while he had no active control over them ; for his destiny might in part depend upon them likewise. Though such introspection seems extraordinary, almost unique, in a youth of nineteen, it was in reality prompted by simple prudence. Once he had dreamt that he was committing a wicked deed—which in itself may be common enough. But in the dream itself there was a thought telling him that he was not dreaming, that he was in full consciousness—and notwithstanding it he still committed the deed. Afterwards he was much troubled in mind, till the High Priest assured him that he was not responsible in any manner whatever, as the sham consciousness alleged in the dream was a part of the dream itself. His responsibility ended with the last conscious thoughts at night.

Being in that introspective mood, it is not surprising that one morning Barath felt an unaccountable sense of sadness. He went into the garden to find relief with the fresh air and the sunshine. But somehow that day the morning seemed to be like evening ; the feeling

that had sometimes come of an evening in his father's palace now returned to him. Perhaps the mental process subtly suggested a similarity between evening and morning, and thereby awakened memories of his father's summer palace. He felt a sense of loneliness. Had Ellen been with him, had placed her arm around him, and whispered to him, "Are you homesick, Dilkhusa?"—in that very thought he recognised his inward pain to be the same as he had felt soon after his arrival in England.

"You are my mother, this is my home," he said again, though she was not there to hear him.

And then, keeping down the lump in his throat, he turned to the house; and in that instant his pain vanished. Framed against the window of one of the rooms on the ground floor, from which she had stepped, a young girl was standing. She held a small basket in one hand to collect flowers, and shaded her eyes with the other, thinking for a moment where to begin. She wore a large straw hat tied loosely with a pale blue ribbon under the chin. Her dark hair was loose behind; her frock was pale blue also, but encircled at the waist with a white ribbon tied in a big knot at the back.

Barath seemed to think he had seen her somewhere before. She took down her hand and happened to turn full towards him. Then he realised that it was her picture he had seen.

She saw him also, and smiled bewitchingly. An English girl of sixteen can be pretty as a dream—as a child that is, as a woman that might be. She held out her hand in frank friendship.

"I am Nora," she said. "You may call me Cousin

Nora, as you are Aunt Ellen's son." The logic was indisputable.

But Barath did not quite know what to do with her hand. He would have liked to kiss it, as the highest homage he could pay. Instead he took it in his own and placed his other hand upon it.

"I—I am—so happy to know you!" he stammered.

"Of course you are," she said reassuringly. "So let's be friends at once." She looked full at him. "I arrived only last night."

"What beautiful deep blue eyes you have!" he exclaimed quite inconsequently. "And yet your hair is dark."

"My eyes are violet, not blue," she said with a pout, then blushed deep. "I am half Irish," she hastened to explain. "My grandmother was Irish. But please don't discuss me. I must gather flowers for Aunt Ellen."

"Let me help you," he asked eagerly, taking her basket. "Tell me where to begin." He rushed at a huge red rose and seized the stalk.

"Take care!" she cried, "or you will prick your fingers. Cut the stalk long with the scissors."

So they went along the garden and Barath learnt his first lesson in English botany. He actually did not know the English names of flowers, or if he did he could not identify them at sight. Nora taught him. Presently he was so interested in the work that he did prick his finger.

"It is nothing," he laughed, and put the finger into his mouth. "I—I—love to gather flowers!"

She glanced at him suspiciously. "I have never done it before!" he hastened to explain; "at least

not since I was twelve. I meant I—I—love gathering them—with you ! ” he blurted out.

She smiled. “ What a funny boy you are ! ” she said suddenly.

“ Why ? ” he asked uneasily.

“ Oh, nothing ! Of course you are different.” She added that as if to herself. “ Now let me reward you for your help.”

She took the full basket from him, selected a rosebud, and put it in his buttonhole. He felt a strange thrill of pleasure as she was doing it.

“ I wish, Nora——” he began hesitatingly as they were returning.

“ Cousin Nora,” she corrected seriously—then immediately spoiled the seriousness by the sweetest of smiles.

“ Well, Cousin Nora, I wish you would—let—me help you *every* day ! Won’t you ? ”

“ Of course, you silly boy ! ” she laughed merrily. “ The flowers are for Aunt Ellen, you see.” Which seemed to be conclusive logic to both of them, and to demand of them the elimination of all self-interest from their hearts in working together.

But alas ! such is human nature, Barath looked forward to the morning hour with an indefinable pleasure, and even permitted his last thoughts at night to linger upon it consciously, though only for a moment. On her side the feeling of pleasure was probably the same, except that it was unconscious.

Barath now lived in a dreamland. He was unreasonably happy, which caused him an occasional qualm of conscience, that is, whenever he detected himself. At the same time it seemed a wicked sin not to accept moments of happy thoughts when Fate granted them.

For there might be pain looming in the distance—for all he knew.

Besides the morning hour he now spent a part of the afternoon with Nora. Sometimes they went to the pier or the cliffs, but usually found their own garden most attractive. She would sit on a bench working at beautiful pieces of lace, which she had learnt to do from her grandmother; and Barath would recline full length on the grass at her feet, occasionally reading his lecture notes between the intervals of conversation. One day the sun, coming past a tree, shone full into his eyes. He closed them awhile, and must have fallen asleep. His right hand was unconsciously outstretched, and came quite near Nora's foot. She could not resist the temptation of pressing the thumb against the grass with the tip of her shoe.

"Awake, thou sluggard knight!" she cried merrily.

He did awake instantly, and closed his fingers upon her shoe.

"What a tiny foot you have!" he said admiringly. "And the lying books say that Englishwomen have large feet! Why, yours are less than the span between my thumb and forefinger. And I don't think my hand is very large." This he added doubtfully.

"In fact it is very small. That is one for you, sir, and two for me!" She blushed crimson. "But you mustn't talk of a person's foot. It isn't nice!"

"Mustn't I?" he said in sudden gravity. "It just shows the difference in custom between England and India. With us a woman's foot is always depicted by the artist as a thing of beauty, just like the hand in Europe; and the Hindu poet lavishes upon it his warmest praise. You see, a high-born woman in India never wears shoes

indoors upon the soft carpet. Hence the foot receives as much attention from childhood as the hand. If she has to go into the garden for a moment she wears soft cloth shoes, which can't hurt the feet. She wears the same if going out in a palanquin. Hence her feet are never cramped."

Nora sat bolt upright. Barath burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing at, you rude boy!" she cried in mock anger. "Release my foot!"

"Not at you, Nora dear," he said hastily, and kissing her foot in a sudden impulse before releasing it. "I was only laughing at a story I remembered."

"A nice story?" she asked in rising curiosity.

"Well, yes—quite nice! It wasn't exactly a story, but an old Sanskrit drama written twenty centuries ago when men and women freely met on occasions. I said a high-born woman gives great attention to her foot. In fact she even adorns it with *alta*, a red vegetable paint, with which she draws a band an inch wide all round the foot—over the toes, along the sides, to the heel. It looks very nice against the rich olive skin which a high-born woman in India should generally possess. Well, in the play a fickle lover comes to visit his sweetheart, but just as he is about to make deep obeisance, bending his brow to her feet, she detects a little *alta* smear on his forehead. 'Out, out, thou false one!' she cries angrily. 'At whose shrine hast thou worshipped before laying thy perjured brow at my feet?' It seems the faithless lover had two sweethearts, and didn't know which he loved best; so he visited both. But, unfortunately, unknown to him the red paint had stuck on his forehead in his obeisance to the first—which of course betrayed him to the second!"

Nora joined heartily in the laugh, then asked in sudden gravity, "Did lovers in India always make such an obeisance to their sweethearts?"

"Always," Barath answered. "Even kings. Listen to the description of the Hindu poet. He wishes to dilate on the beauty of his lady-love, but cannot venture to raise his eyes above her feet; for her face and form are a heaven beyond his vision. And what can he say of her feet? This: 'I see their nails polished by the crest gems of prostrate kings!' Do you understand the idea? He means that her beauty is so great that kings come to her as suitors in such numbers and so frequently, in full regalia, that the nails of her feet are kept polished by the diamonds upon their brows in the act of homage."

"That never happens in Europe!" Nora suddenly exclaimed with a sigh, then checked herself instantly. "But of course it wouldn't happen in India either—to-day. Would it?" She glanced at him sideways.

"It would!" he resolutely maintained. "I assure you it would, if the circumstances were the same."

"Tell me something about India," she asked after a pause. "I mean about the women."

"I have met none," Barath answered, with a laugh. "Except children with whom I played; they don't count, do they? Of course there was my mother—she must have been lovely when she was young. And my grandmother, who also had been beautiful I heard. And there is Delini." Among the children he included Suvona. She was indeed more precious to him than the other children he had played with, just because she came to fill the void after Delini's departure, but was still a child—as he knew her.

"I have heard of Delini," Nora said; "Aunt Ellen told me all about her. She is three years older than you, so she is twenty-two. She married when she was nearly sixteen. She is very clever. There! Am I right?"

"Quite. She *is* very clever; she taught me Indian history. . . . There is none like Delini." This he added after a moment's thought, in mingled *pride* and regret. "She told me wonderful stories of Hindu women in the past."

"True stories?" Nora asked. "I hate fiction. I try to believe everything I read to be true."

"Just what Delini said! Even the old legends and epics she thought *might* have been true. But the stories she told me were all from history." He cast down his eyes and added, "In fact most of them were about women of our house."

"Tell me some of them?" Nora asked.

He tried to do so as best he could, but soon his interest flagged. After all his narrative sounded to him from its very nature to be an indirect panegyric upon his own dynasty. He stopped suddenly.

"How tantalising you are!" Nora cried impatiently. "You were just coming to the nicest part. It was midnight; they were in a lonely castle; she was only seventeen; her lover, desperately wounded in battle, was laid at her feet. The enemies, pretending to retire at sunset, were now creeping back to take the postern-gate by surprise; their object was to slay her lover and carry her away. The first hinge of the wicket in the postern-gate was silently cut away. What was she to do? If she hastened to the front to bring the guards, it might be too late; if she called aloud, she would

awake her lover from his soothing slumber which was his only chance of life. Well, what *did* she do ? ”

But Barath hung down his head, and was silent. Nora thought a moment, thrust the lace-work into its basket and took out a long skein of wool.

“ Now, sir, you have got to help me ! ” she said, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. “ Sit up straight, and hold up your arms.”

He sat up on the grass in Indian fashion, and held up both arms. She immediately slipped the skein over them down to the wrists, and began unwinding from one end of the wool and rolling it into a ball.

“ Now you are my prisoner,” she said gaily, “ and have got to talk while I roll.”

And so it was. He had to look up, as otherwise his arms might go aslant, which would interfere with the unwinding. So he looked into her face.

“ Oh, Nora, you are the beautifullest girl I have ever seen ! There is not one in the Park in London on a Sunday to compare with you ! ”

“ You mustn’t say beautifullest ; it isn’t grammar,” she corrected solemnly.

“ I wasn’t thinking of grammar. I was thinking of your face.”

“ Do you always speak out what you think ? ”

“ Always. At least to people I—I—those that are nice to me. Oh, Nora, do you know what I have done with your photo which you gave me ? I have a few thin sticks of scented incense which I brought from India. So I burnt one last night before the picture.”

“ What made you do that ? ” she cried in horror. She had a hazy notion of hearing somewhere that burn-

ing incense and lighting candles before images was a—a—some wicked words—yes, a pernicious and damnable practice. There was a single comprehensive word she could not remember just then.

“I don’t know what made me do it,” Barath admitted, “Just something inside me. But, oh, Nora, it made me feel so happy!”

“I now remember!” Nora exclaimed in sudden enlightenment. “Why, it is idolatry!”

“Well, is that so very terrible? In the East we often are idolaters. We make idols of our ideals, and divinities of human clay.”

Nora’s stern solemnity vanished. She laughed aloud. “I don’t know what you are talking about. I don’t even know what an ideal means.”

“Neither do I. But I have often heard and read of the word. I wonder if I ever shall meet an ideal! I don’t know where or how to look for it.” Which was all strictly true so far as Barath was conscious. Hitherto all his ideals had been clothed in ideas so far as he was aware, not in human shape. Of course he thought his parents were perfect, and Delini perfect; and now that Ellen had taken his mother’s place, she also. He could think of no other, consciously.

“Oh, never mind about all that!” Nora impetuously broke into his thoughts. “You haven’t finished the story!”

So Barath had to finish the narrative. The Rajput maiden took her lover’s sword and went herself to the postern-gate. The enemies would have to enter in single file by the low and narrow wicket, and in silence so as not to awake the garrison. And in silence she stood beside the wicket, her lover’s sword uplifted to

her shoulder. The first man entered, stooping and bending down his head to the yard-high wicket—the sword descended upon his neck—the headless body pitched forward because of its own momentum. Likewise the second, the third, and the rest. The frenzy of despair, of love, of instant determination had produced a species of trance or self-hypnotisation in which she acted like an automaton without consciousness. Still she stood with the reeking sword uplifted to her shoulder after each blow, awaiting a foe—but there was none. . . . And then her discovery by the garrison, and the subterfuge of love practised on her before awaking her from the trance to shut out forever from her the knowledge of what she had done.

“Who was she?” Nora asked. Barath hesitated.

“You must tell me,” she insisted, “or I’ll think it is made up. As fiction, it would be horrible: as fact, it was splendid—of the girl.”

“She was my mother’s mother’s mother,” Barath answered.

Nora fell to thinking. “I *believe* an English girl would do the same,” she said slowly, “that is, if she—loved him—very much.”

There was a pause. Their eyes met. “I wonder what love is,” Barath asked. He had a vague recollection of having asked the same question of some one before. . . . Yes, it was Delini who told him of it.

“I am sure I don’t know!” Nora said, blushing in momentary confusion.

“Neither do I. But I wish I did. Because then I could love.” He actually thought in his simplicity that if he could identify any emotion of his as being love, he could forthwith go and practise love.

"Whom do you wish to love?" she asked slowly, looking at a sparrow on the lawn.

"Why, everybody!" Barath answered.

Nora shook her head in wisdom. "That wouldn't be real love. You can't love more than one person."

"I never thought of that before. Then how can you tell if you love any one?"

"I don't know—how can I?"

"I now remember what Delini said. She would do anything for the man she loved, in life or death." Which was quite true; but apart from such heroic tests, which Delini with the traditions of her house would naturally think of, there were simpler symptoms of love which from social conditions would not have occurred to her: such as a constant desire to seek the society of the loved one, and even if the desire were unconscious the subsequent indefinable pain at separation.

"Delini was quite right," Nora commented. "But English girls are not required to do much. I wish they were!" She was thinking. "I mean something exciting; something *desperate*!" She looked tragic.

No, I was wrong in saying that there was little imagination in England. Most English girls of sixteen yearn at heart to be heroines—and practise play-acting Juliet in privacy. They have quite resolved to be a Juliet or a nun. I am very sorry for those that have not. If you demur at the age, make it eighteen or even twenty. But if to some the yearning comes neither at sixteen, nor eighteen, nor twenty, then mark them well that you may avoid them. They are not nice at twenty-five or thirty-five.

"Tell me more stories about Indian girls you heard

from Delini," Nora continued after a pause. "True stories, mind!"

So Barath had to tell her all he knew. In fact on subsequent days he had to supplement them by episodes from Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan*. Her interest was so aroused thereby that she resolved to read the book itself, big as it was, when she grew up. And on his part, the narratives incidentally led to occasional references to other historical or social matters, and ultimately resulted in an avowal of his own hopes and aspirations. In fact he made a confidante of her. Why, it never occurred to him to ask himself. He *thought* he would have done exactly the same with Delini had she been with him then.

Thus the days passed unheeded. One morning he missed Nora in the garden. She had a headache, and breakfasted in her room. Afterwards she was busy and did not come down. The morning seemed quite different to Barath. The flowers in the garden were not nearly so nice, unplucked.

But she came down early in the afternoon, and brought the flower basket.

"I must get them now," she said. "They will do for the dining-room and drawing-room."

Barath's pleasure in helping her was all the greater for being belated. He worked with enthusiasm.

"Don't be extravagant! You are cutting down everything."

"I was forgetting," he answered. "I must leave some for to-morrow. We must begin early to-morrow. I was hoping you would come down sooner to-day. Is your headache quite gone, Nora? It is horrid having a headache. I was wishing all the time you would

come down, so that I could try something for it. I don't know exactly what, but *something*. I am so glad it is gone now. Oh, Nora, I have had such a wicked thought! I really wanted you to have *some* little hurt or pain—something very slight that you didn't mind—and you were with me, so that I could do something and cure it at once. And I wished that you wanted something that you couldn't reach—and I fetched it for you. You see I am a little taller than you. And all the time I have been wishing to do something or anything to—to——” He stopped to think of a word, then went on impetuously, to mention various thoughts and wishes begotten of unconscious gladness at seeing her now.

Nora stood looking at him with wondering eyes. She too felt a sense of gladness which to her young perception might have amounted to no more than the pleasure of knowing his desire to do her service. But the gladness was tinged with a little element of sadness to which she could allot no conscious cause.

“There! I have left quite enough for to-morrow,” he said gleefully as he finished.

“Yes, quite enough. You will know how to pick them out yourself.” She said that in a voice that sounded strange to herself.

“Why?” he asked, a sudden presentiment knocking at his heart.

“Because I am going away this afternoon. That is why I did not come down sooner. I was packing.”

“Going where?”

“To school of course. I was only here for the holidays.”

That simple fact had never occurred to Barath. He

had accepted her presence as a gift of Fate, and it had never entered into his mind to consider its possible withdrawal. He had lived in an atmosphere of unconscious dreams. Now he awoke, rebuking himself for not having done so sooner. And in the awaking the gladness of a moment ago—aye, of these preceding days—was taken away from him.

After all he needed companionship. Had he been like any other boy of nineteen the friendship of his comrades at College would have sufficed. But he was unlike any other boy of his age. I have said before that he had two distinct sides to his nature—the perception of a hoary philosopher by sheer intuition in the graver things of life, and the heart of a child in matters of daily occurrence. The High Priest would have attributed the latter phase to the mere human element in Barath's nature—in which even in Christendom the highest type can only be attained by becoming like "one of these little ones"—but the former phase, Barath's intuitive perception in the graver things of life, Vashista would have attributed to something greater than the profoundest of human philosophy, to some element in his nature other than human. Nevertheless Vashista himself would have acknowledged the intensity of the pain Barath was capable of suffering on the human side of his make.

In that moment Barath felt that in some manner he was standing alone in the world. He indeed had the friendship of Wingate and Ellen, and even Francis Thompson; but somehow they belonged to his other nature. In the present phase he had none but Nora. And now he was about to lose her.

"Will you come back again?" he asked.

"Perhaps. But I have so many uncles and aunts whom I have to visit in turn that I am never sure when I can see Aunt Ellen."

"But when you leave school? You'll have more time then."

"I shan't leave school for at least a year." She hesitated. "I think—I am—sorry for that."

"Oh, Nora, you won't mind if I ask something of you? I have your photo, but that is last year's. Do let me have one the next time you are taken. Won't you, Nora?"

"I shall," she answered simply. He had been her playmate, and without perceiving anything further she yet understood his regret at parting from her, and shared in the regret herself. "But we mustn't waste any more time; you can still help me to-day," she added cheerfully.

He carried the full basket to a bench, and a few extra flowers he had plucked in the ardour of work. She sat on the bench to make bouquets and bunches, and he as usual on the grass at her feet, with ribbon in hand to tie the flowers. For the moment he forgot the coming parting, and was happy again.

He gazed at her deft fingers at work, and talked to her vivaciously. He told her many things in that brief hour, beginning with flowers—how in India they never made bouquets, but garlands. That led to other matters. Had Nora been grown-up and a woman of the world she would have perceived that the predominant and persistent element in all that he said was the sheer sense of joy in just sitting at her feet, looking up to her, and talking to her—but also that he was not fully conscious of any basic cause for the joy. It seemed to him sufficient

to sit there and talk. Being as she was, Nora also shared in the sense of joy, likewise unconscious of its cause ; to her it was sufficient to listen.

When the required number of bouquets was finished, ~~she took the~~ remaining flowers and began to weave them into a new shape. Barath was so engrossed in talking to her that he did not notice the difference. She on her part let her fingers interpret some subconscious thought in her mind—and the flowers took their new shape almost mechanically.

It was a garland she had woven.

“ There, that’s one for you, sir ! ” she exclaimed gaily—and promptly threw it over his head.

Milton has said that the earth reeled when Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Vashista would have avowed that the stars should have fallen from the firmament when Nora threw the garland over Barath’s head—even though in childlike innocence.

“ What have you done—oh, what have you done ! ” the words broke from his lips in terror.

In a sense he too had participated in the eating of the forbidden fruit—inasmuch as the garland now lay upon his neck—and like Adam his eyes were opened.

Oh, what was Nora to him—what was she to him ! Was he destined to be the new Krishna or the new Adam ? The doubt surged through his reeling brain. .

Then as quickly enlightenment came—in an instant’s flash. *He might be both ! . . .* He bent down his head and kissed Nora’s hand.

She was startled by his sheer intensity. “ You are a strange boy ! You frighten me ! ”

“ It is nothing, dear,” he said in almost superhuman calmness. “ It is done now ! ”

"What is done now?"

"I must not tell you," he answered, casting down his eyes. But she heard the sound of tears in his voice.

She was instantly sorry. "Have I done anything to make you unhappy? I am so sorry, Barath! I did not mean to."

"On the contrary, supremely happy," he said, looking up to her face. "Only it seems sinful of me to accept the happiness."

She shook her head. "I do not understand a bit what you say."

"It is better that you should not, dear. If what you have done is ever to come true, you will know it in time. If not, it is better that you should never know."

She was still more mystified, but he tried to soothe her by his tenderness. He felt he now had a right to heap all the tenderness of his heart upon her. He knew not what Fate had in store for him, but he would accept whatever it might be. One thing he did perceive—the possibility of Nora shaping his destiny in some manner. It was enough for the present.

"Go back to school cheerfully, Nora dear. You will have many friends there, and will perhaps forget all about this holiday. But I shan't mind; you have already given me many happy days."

But notwithstanding his brave words, when the carriage taking her to the station was at the door, his resignation was not altogether so firm.

"Good-bye, Nora," he said wistfully.

"Good-bye, Barath. No, I shan't forget this holiday—and the photo." She added that hastily and sprang into the carriage.

Then only when the carriage drove away and took her from his sight did he realise the fulness of grief at the parting. A sense of desolation swept over his heart. He had lost his playmate. Yes, his playmate, his comrade, his confidante. What else, he may have dimly felt but could not name.

He came to a window and looked down the long road the carriage had taken. There he stood gazing, and dreaming again, till even the carriage was beyond his vision. Then awaking from his dream, he took off the garland, kissed it, wrapped it in a piece of silk, and placed it in a sandal-wood box. What do European brides do with their wedding-robcs ? If I had a European sister I would ask her to dedicate hers to the altar at which she had wedded. To Barath the garland was more precious than the wedding-robe to a bride. For his marriage might be with earth or with heaven. Nora had done that—and now unconsciously held in her hand a talisman more potent than Aladdin's lamp. If she chose, she could claim from him his very destiny—and could be the maker of a new Krishna, or merely be a new Eve to a new Adam. . . .

Ellen had been too occupied since bidding Nora good-bye to notice Barath's desolation. At night it was too palpable. He sat at her feet on the carpet as he had ever done, but could say nothing.

"Are you sad, my Dilkusha ?" she asked tenderly.

Then the words surged up from his heart to his lips, and would not be denied. He laid his head upon her knees, saying, "Mother mine, I wish to die !"

When he went to his room that night he sat at the table, gazing at Nora's picture on the chimney-piece

beyond. He had lit incense before it, and now sat still, his arms folded on the table, his eyes upon the picture encircled in the halo of incense. His senses, acute before, were now gradually lulled to rest. It might have been caused by a sort of quasi-hypnotic influence of the constant gaze upon the halo, or perhaps by the mere reaction from the intensity of his previous emotions. His weary head sank lower and lower, and finally lay upon his arms. He slept.

When he awoke it must have been midnight. He saw Francis Thompson standing on the other side of the table, smoking his pipe thoughtfully. A close friendship had grown up between the two. Thompson had often come into his room, but always at the midnight hour; for it was only then that his tongue was loosened: long accustomed to silence by day in the desert of London, he yearned for speech at midnight. Not that he spoke much even then; in fact, the conversation between him and Barath mostly consisted of silence broken by occasional words at intervals of ten or fifteen minutes. They understood each other best that way; the intervening silence being filled by mutual thought crystallised into words in the next utterance.

"Yes, sleep is better than tears," Thompson said, looking at Barath when he awoke.

Then Barath knew that Thompson understood. Understood him and sympathised with him.

"I would not wish you to outgrow this day," Thompson added after awhile, "but rather that you should live to bless it."

Five minutes after Barath answered, "I shall bless this day and all other days, come what may."

"True, true indeed. It will help you in your life's

work. Who should know but I? I was born in my mother's pain, and shall die in my own."

Barath also knew the necessity of pain. But this was his first personal grief. Even his mother's death had been surrounded by a spiritual glamour whereby the sense of loss had been quenched in the sense of exaltation. Now at this simple parting, an episode happening a thousand times a day on earth, he experienced his first personal contact with a sorrow common to all humanity—and it almost overwhelmed him. Just because his nature was attuned to a pitch of intensity unpossessed by others.

Moreover, though Thompson could not as yet know the nature of Barath's future life-work, he had yet implied that it was specially necessary for an Eastern to accept pain. Barath seized that idea and mentally enlarged upon it. He saw the tribulation of the East in the past and present, and in the dim vision that arose in his mind of the future conflict between East and West he also saw the trials the former would have to endure before she emerged, not victorious, but with bare life. At any other time he would have accepted the lesson; in that moment he was inclined to revolt at it.

"Fate ever allots the pain to the East," he said unresignedly. "Is it just?"

"It is just," Thompson answered. "The East is the womb of thought."

Slowly, gradually Thompson's meaning began to dawn upon Barath; then intuition supplied the rest as a vivid picture. In a single flash he now saw Thompson's conception of the mission of the East—which might indeed be true!

"You have made me understand—I thank you for it," Barath exclaimed. The picture in his mind had grown so rapidly as to need a torrent of words to keep pace with it. "Yes, the sun arises in the east that it may shine upon the west. The East must still be the beginning of human thought. Must conceive the mysteries of life. Act the true prophet to mankind, and suffer the fate of the true prophet. He may not reveal the mysteries entrusted to him, even to the elect of the earth. Their moral he may indeed preach from the housetop; for it is written that none shall hear him, or hearing, believe him; it is written that no true prophet shall be believed in his lifetime, that for his reward he shall be stoned to death by the roadway outside the city."

"Or be left to starve within its streets," Thompson answered in vague agitation. "It is worse for him to starve to death before he has delivered his message, than to be stoned to death after it. There may be one who will have both—who will starve first and be stoned afterwards."

"Then the fate of the East you have suggested would be doubly his," Barath continued. "I thank you again for my understanding. The mission of the true prophet is a mission of pain. For in pain and anguish has he begotten the mysteries, far greater than the pain of the human mother—pain in the begetting, pain in the birth. The pain is not merely in seeing truths that are painful but also in hearing tidings of joy, even as the human mother brings forth her child in like pain whether it be ugly or beautiful."

"The same thought has sometimes come to me," Thompson said, "but I have never shaped it in words."

You have done so now. I thank you for it. You too have made me understand."

"I found the words in seeing you," Barath answered simply.

Verily it was so. Once, on the high road between Delhi and Lahore, Barath had beheld a man encased in jewels, with diamonds upon the very trappings of his horse; he did not think it worth looking back to see him twice. But once on the winding way to Benares and Buddh-Gaya he saw another sitting in a pool of his own blood and writing on the pathway with his dripping finger; he paused to read the writing.

And now he found the man again in Francis Thompson.

He accepted the pain of parting from Nora.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ARMING OF THE EAST

WHEN Barath returned to College he found he had actually made greater progress in his studies during the holidays than if he had been attending lectures instead. The episodes in which he had participated at Boscombe, brief as they were, had enlarged his vision, accentuated his perception, and matured his judgment before its time—and all because new emotions had been begotten within him.

He had been asked to read English History as a holiday task. He learnt its lessons fully, and the master-key to his mental perception was his own heart: the imperishable impressions made upon it by the scenes enacted at Boscombe. He began to see English things with English eyes at will.

Hitherto he had had a dual personality: as a child in most things, as a philosopher in others. Now he developed a third side to his character; rather a new duality supplementing the old. The old remained, and he was still alternately the child and the philosopher. In the next twelve months he added the capacity to be an Eastern or a Western at will, as required for the moment. He had indeed possessed the early beginning of such a capacity when he had commenced his studies under English masters at the Ajmere College; now

the faculty was developed so deeply as to enable him to adopt by sheer instinct the Eastern or Western attitude, or both alternately if both were needed for a perfect view. The net result was that at twenty he had an understanding given to few men. Believing in reincarnation, Barath saw the possibility of worlds other than this planet, wherefore of the communion of souls beyond the limit of space. It is all so easy for an Eastern to feel that he is standing on a pinnacle, viewing all earth !

Subconsciously his newly-begotten English instincts, English predilections, had permeated his heart for the best part of a year since he left Boscombe, when a letter came to him from his father which caused in him a vague uneasiness and a subtle pain. For in some manner it seemed to militate against the recent tendency of his thoughts.

“MY SON, peace and greetings. So far I have only written to thee to give news of ourselves, our friends, and those dear to us. Affairs of State I have never mentioned because I wished thy studies to be untrammelled by other thoughts. But recently events have happened with great swiftness, and in a single year since thy departure more changes have been inaugurated than in the decade before. I feel it my duty, as thy father, to inform thee of them, for they may be of great importance to thee in the future.

“First, we have now a new Resident. He is in every manner acceptable in himself, for he spontaneously realises that the old relationship existing between us and the Imperial Government must and shall be maintained, and all that he has done

or suggested so far have been in accordance with the spirit thereof. In that I am glad : I would rather that the spirit be old though the deeds be new, than the spirit new and the deeds as ever before. So I have consented to sanction the inauguration of new industries and new enterprises : I hope they will benefit our people.

“ But now something follows that disquiets me. I am advised to enter more personally in the direct administration of the State. My son, thou knowest the traditions of our house, which are different from those of most of the other States of India. While participating at heart in the joys and sorrows of our people, and publicly manifesting our feelings by seeing our people on certain occasions, we may not partake in the actual work of administration for which we have properly accredited ministers. The British Resident tells me that the ministers may be corrupt. In answer I have appointed the High Priest my dewan, my prime minister and actual administrator of the State. Thou knowest that a Brahmin may hold such an office—and in the past has sometimes been the maker of the might of his sovereign. I can only hope that this arrangement will stand. I am too old to begin the new order. Do as thou wilt when thou dost sit upon thy father’s throne.

“ With Vashista’s advice I am sending to Europe a Commission to study the best institutions of the West, especially the methods of material progress. A few months ago several young men were sent to learn the technical arts of the West independently : they will now be controlled and directed by this

Commission. Its members are also young men, for they themselves have to study and to learn—but in groups, not independently. At their head Vashista has advised me to appoint Madhava, the son of the last representative of the ill-fated house of Jhansi. This young man went to England to study law seven years ago, and had almost an unprecedented success. At his Inn he obtained every scholarship and prize that was open to him, so that after the three years of legal study he was enabled to visit some of the leading countries of Europe and acquire a general knowledge of their public institutions. This he did for twelve months, and on his return to Barathpur three years ago he was appointed a junior assistant to the dewan. He has given every satisfaction, and in consequence Vashista has made him his assistant-secretary.

“The new dewan has done so in pursuance of a far-reaching policy: he desires to employ the cleverest youths in India he can find, so that besides Madhava he has six others, who, though inferior to Madhava in legal and political knowledge, stand higher in the knowledge of general European culture. These six are Indian youths who competed in the last few years for the Civil Service of British India, but did not obtain an appointment. Thou dost know that the Indian Civil Service is about the most difficult examination in England, and since failure in it does not necessarily imply failure in intellectual matters, but in such collateral qualifications as riding, Vashista conceived the plan of inviting such men as had failed in it to enter the service of Barathpur. It is possible

that some of them may entertain a feeling of resentment against the British Government for their failure to obtain the original appointment : I hope, however, that the resentment will be lessened by their finding alternative service in Barathpur—without which they might continue to eat their hearts in bitterness in British India.

“ The six men I have mentioned are included in the Commission. Their previous training in general European culture will serve them well in acquiring rapidly the special knowledge they have now in view. The Commission will visit thee to pay its respects to thee. Grant it audience at thy convenience.

“ And now I shall close with tidings of joy. On the occasion of the coming Diamond Jubilee of our beloved Empress I have appointed thee my representative. Choose thy suite for the purpose from the members of the Commission. They are taking with them thy robes of state.

“ Hoping all is well with thee as it is with me,—thy beloved father,

“ BARATH OF BARATHPUR.

“ Given in the inner palace,

With the winter sun in the South

On the seventh day of the bright side of the moon,

In the month of Falgoon (February)

In the year of the Samvat 1953 (A.D. 1897).”

To carry out his father's wishes Barath came to London at the beginning of the long vacation, about three weeks before the Diamond Jubilee. He had much to do meanwhile. The Barathpuri Commission

had arrived the month before, and had now been joined by the young men who had preceded it and who were ~~already~~ receiving instruction in various parts of Europe. They now met in London to wait upon Barath.

He was greatly interested in the Commission. Of the men who had just arrived he knew Madhava personally ; the others, youths of equal ability, he was glad to meet, one of whom attracted his particular attention. Vindara was altogether a remarkable youth. At Cambridge, five years before, he had obtained first class honours in Classics, which was unprecedented for an Eastern. He was also an English poet of much promise, with great possibilities in high-class drama, so that one of the greatest English dramatists of the day besought him to devote himself to literature. For family reasons however the youth had to seek some employment of immediate financial value, and had competed for the Civil Service of British India. He had passed very high, with record marks in Classics, which for an Indian youth was a triumph indeed. Unfortunately for him he had met some Socialists—not indeed of the Hyde Park order, but of the academic type—who had captured his fancy : consequently he had made a speech at the Cambridge Union on behalf of academic Socialism, with a suggested reference to India, which was done frequently enough by English Socialists, but which was deemed to be revolutionary when uttered by an Indian. So thought the Civil Service authorities : Vindara did not obtain the appointment. Judging by a former precedent one would imagine that he was just the type of man, of marked ability, whom it would have been judicious and diplomatic of the authorities to silence forever by according him the appointment—nay, to win

him over altogether by a generous treatment. But we have seen what was done in the green wood ; so what can we expect in the dry ? After Beaconsfield's death political foresight in Indian matters had fled from England, and if the loyalty of sixty millions could be turned into sedition by irresponsible writers, one can realise how easy it was to turn a possible useful servant of the State into a possible enemy.

Vindara fell back on the advice of his friend, the English dramatist, and sought to obtain literary employment with his aid. But just then a calamity happened : the English dramatist was broken on the wheel to promote the cause of morality. His very name was banished from men's lips : to have been known as a literary protégé of his, or even a chance acquaintance, would have involved personal ruin. The men in high places and low, who really could not cast a stone at him because of the Biblical reason but were fortunate enough to remain undetected, put on a garb of virtue and pretended not to hear when some tactless fool mentioned a work of the fallen genius. *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the talk of the town, was named no more.

Denied the opportunity of work in England, and shunned at every street corner by the very men who had been taught to regard him as a possible successor to the fallen genius, Vindara returned to India with the hatred of England in his heart. . . . Nay, not the England of old : he knew English history and English literature too well for that ; but the England created by the banjo poet, by the flag-wagger, by the music-hall buffoon, by the chest-thumping imperialist who wears a primrose but knows not his own sire Beaconsfield.

Vindara subsequently entered the service of Barath-

pur, and now returned to Europe with the Barathpuri Commission as its general secretary. Practically as its organiser because of his imagination : he was to assist Madhava in projecting the various departmental schemes of the Commission.

Barath received the members at his guardian's house in Kensington ; they were presented to him by Madhava.

"I sincerely hope," Barath said to Vindara in English, "that you will forget the past and now devote yourself to the service of our State."

Vindara bowed. "So long as I am in the service of Barathpur my thoughts will be of Barathpur alone. I shall have no past."

"It will suffice," Barath answered. He turned to another member, a new arrival in Europe.

"And thou, Chandra Sena, the son of fourscore warriors, knights of Rajasthan that fought with sword and lance and battle-axe, what hast thou come to learn in these piping times of peace ? "

"Whatsoever it shall be appointed me to learn, Heaven-born," Chandra answered. "I know nothing so far. The Dewan bade me await instructions when I reached my destination."

"Which is——? "

"Berlin."

Madhava explained. "Chandra's orders are with us in a sealed packet, but we may not open it before we reach Berlin."

Barath smiled. "Why this secrecy ?"—he felt inclined to ask, but abstained on remembering the necessity for implicit obedience to orders on the part of men who would be the future commanders of others.

"And thou, Nishi Kashe," he addressed another,

“the future director of the iron-works of Barathpur, thou hast been nine months in England already : what hast thou learnt ? ”

“ Nothing so far, Heaven-born, except how to separate the iron from the ore. I am at Middlesbrough solely for that.”

“ And afterwards ? ”

“ In three months more I shall go to Newcastle. There I shall receive further orders.”

This man's work was to be of the greatest importance. Vashista had recognised that iron was the foundation of all modern industries, and its production the first consideration in building up the resources of a State. Fortunately for Barathpur coal and iron had been found in it a few years before, so he had resolved that the iron-works should be opened as soon as possible. Among the first batch of youths he had sent the previous year to study the technical arts, Nishi Kashe was the most promising. A young man of twenty-five, he had graduated at the Bombay University with honours in the physical sciences—which were the basis of all the technical arts. So Vashista held out to him the novel and brilliant prospect of becoming the first director of the iron-works of Barathpur within six years. For a Japanese had just attained a like position in Japan, after studying in Europe—and the news travelled from Tokio to Mecca.

Nishi's particular duty was to learn the successive processes of iron manufacture, from the extraction of the ore to the making of the finished article. So he began with Middlesbrough, and might end anywhere between Pittsburg and Essen, according to his future instructions.

“And what shalt thou finally learn to make?”
Barath asked of him.

“Anything or all things, as I am bidden. Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares—or sheet-anchors.”

Barath's mind was working. He dreamed of the future of his State. The facilities were great. There was a waterfall not many miles from the mines; it might be used to supply the motive-power for the iron-works when opened. Yes, Barathpur might make its own bridges, railways, even locomotives, and supply some to British India.

“It is well, Nishi,” he said. “Learn these things, and learn them quickly. I shall not detain thee further; return to Middlesbrough forthwith.”

But the shaper of Nishi's vocation was to be Vashista, not Barath, nor Barath's father. That thought did not occur to Barath in that moment, or if it did it was dismissed as immaterial. Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares, or sheet-anchors, were all useful.

“Or bridges and girders, cranes and cranks, or a thousand-ton steam-hammer,” Nishi added on departing. “Whatsoever I am bidden.”

Which might imply a potentiality for making other big, big things of steel and iron.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

THE Diamond Jubilee was one of the landmarks in Barath's life. It was a week of intoxicating delights. First, he had to be presented to his Empress.

"I have never seen you in full dress," Ellen said to him when the day arrived. "I just long to!"

"If it pleases you I shall be happy," Barath answered. Next to his duty to his Empress his chief thought was to please Ellen, to win her approval rather than the admiration of the world. Usually he was absent-minded when dressing: once Ellen had found him at breakfast with *two* collars on, and had teased him gaily; and once of a winter evening, when it was dark early, he had gone to his room to change his jacket—and had actually divested himself and was getting into bed under the impression that he had gone up for that purpose, when the dinner-gong aroused him from his reverie.

But now he dressed with deliberation. His trousers were of shot silk, rosy pink, and crinkled and tapering from the knees to the ankles. The shoes were woven with gold thread so close together as scarcely to reveal the cloth below. The *chupkan* (tunic) also was of pink silk, but slightly lighter than the trousers, and brocaded with small flowers in their natural colours,

the tiny leaves of fresh green hue. The turban was of yellow silk, with a gold fringe in front and a gold band down either side. Thus far he dressed himself. There remained the choga,¹ the sword, the necklace. He went to Ellen for them.

"A knight of old received his arms from his lady-love; failing that, from his mother or sister. You have no lady-love, Dilkhusa, so receive them from your mother."

"I have no lady-love, mother mine," Barath answered, with downcast eyes.

Ellen fastened the belt and the jewelled tulwar over the tunic; the collar of nine rows of pearls on his neck; and around him the choga. This was magnificent, and unlike anything seen in the West. Its groundwork was of silk, not so deep as crimson in colour, nor so bright as scarlet. It was encrusted with flowers woven in gold, but beneath the gold variously coloured strips of silk were so cunningly arranged as to be themselves invisible, and yet to give a shot effect by tiny pin-points of the colours peeping through the interstices between the gold. A work that could be done nowhere else but in India, and in India to perfection only in Delhi.

Ellen looked at Barath at arm's length, then kissed him five times.

"Dilkhusa, I am proud of you!" she cried in delight, and looked him over at every angle. She smiled gaily and whispered to him, "You will create a sensation, dear—and turn people's heads!"

¹ The old toga, formerly worn in India as in Rome, but now a flowing robe of state. For a lesser purpose the shawl is worn instead—and exactly in the manner of the Roman toga.

Barath would have blushed furiously if he could. Instead he suddenly laid his head on her shoulder to hide his face, and put his arm round her. "I don't want to, mother dear—not while I have you—and—and——"

"Nora," Ellen whispered softly.

But Barath did create a sensation. He was presented to his Empress by the Secretary-of-State for India, together with sixteen other representatives of his country. Her Majesty saw at a glance that he was the youngest of them, the youngest man there present. When the formal ceremony was over she recalled him and received him personally with that gracious tenderness that needs no mention here—save to indicate that the memory of a thousand such acts still remains in India, where alone in her wide domain she was known as Mother and Sovereign. Afterwards a great duchess, great socially and politically, requested the Indian Secretary—who was of course a Cabinet colleague of her husband—"to bring that sweet boy" to her. She forthwith invited him to come to her ball next day, to which Ellen and Melnor were also coming.

Though not yet intended for the gaieties of life, Barath had to accept. Wingate was excused because of his advanced age; in fact he had latterly received premonitions of coming feebleness, which Ellen had quickly detected; wherefore, with loving firmness, she now forbade any dissipation after nightfall. She herself had been to few social functions in recent years, calling herself old since thirty-five. But this was to be a ball of almost historic interest, and she knew that she would soon have to launch Barath in Society. So she consented to re-enter the world for his sake.

But strange how a trivial matter caused her misgivings ! She passed over several dresses, and at last selected one with a high corsage ; even then she was doubtful of Barath's real opinion !

She came down in trepidation after dressing, and felt a crimson glow mounting her cheeks. But Barath noted only the diamond star on her hair.

" Oh, mother darling, how beautiful you are ! " he said, kissing her hand. " Beautiful as a queen ! "

She sighed in relief—feeling her motherhood retained, her throne unimperilled. . . . In reality it never was in peril. Had she been any other woman, younger or older, more beautiful or less, Barath's inward opinion might have been in question. Being his mother, in his estimation, any opinion about her simply could not exist. His mother would have been a goddess, always and forever, even if she had chosen to appear before him in the garb of a goddess. . . .

Wingate was waiting to see them depart. He was glad that Barath's first ball in England should be under the best auspices. He may have had presentiments of the impression that it might make upon his heart—as upon the heart of any youth susceptible to and subjected to the pleasantest attractions of life ; yet it was best for Barath that the first ordeal should be the severest, the first fascination the strongest. Still it might be tempting fate unnecessarily to prolong the fascination till it was actually cast upon the heart.

Strange how the wisest counsels of one's dearest friends are sometimes wasted—by being needless. Did Barath need such solicitude ? Happy Barath, to receive the care even needlessly !

" I do not want you to make a Cinderella of him,"

Wingate said to Ellen, "and whisk him off at midnight. Stay a couple of hours or more—but see that he doesn't get into mischief!"

"Never fear," Ellen answered. "I shall chaperon this debutante—and play the dragon!"

Barath did not know what she meant, but still was delighted with every arrangement she made for him. She chose his partners—to sit out with, as he did not dance—chose young debutantes of eighteen or nineteen, not women of twenty-five, the most dangerous for boys of twenty. She might have spared herself the anxiety: Barath was incapable of taking harm; his mind and heart were already dominated, though subconsciously, by thoughts of others—not of the most beautiful debutante there present, nor the most fascinating woman.

He found much pleasure in talking to his partners. They naturally began by complimenting him upon his "perfect English," which made him confess that he had had an English tutor before he came to England—and thus the chat turned on India. He mentioned his sister Delini, and thereby the things he had learnt from her. His partners were deeply interested, and gratified him much by their keen appreciation. And yet, somehow, he vaguely felt that the joy of telling these self-same things to another several months before had been far greater.

After he had finished his brief programme he stood aside with Ellen for awhile, watching the dancers.

"Mother dear," he suddenly said to her, "there are many beautiful women here—but not one as beautiful as you."

"Hush, darling, you mustn't say that! You must

reserve such praise for—don't you see many lovely young girls here ? ”

“ Yes. But——” He glanced round wistfully.

“ But what, dear ? ”

“ But not the most loveliest girl in England ! ”

“ You will some day—I hope,” she answered. “ Wait awhile, a little while.”

Thus Barath came away from his first English ball scathless. Yea, scathless. Perhaps even confirmed in the thoughts already planted in his heart.

The day of the Diamond Jubilee was of special moment to Barath. He rode in the procession with the Indian Princes, and was the cynosure of all eyes. His youth first attracted the attention of the spectators, then his gallant bearing and beaming courtesy aroused their admiration. He was a conspicuous figure even among the Indian Princes, not because of his magnificence, but in this case because of his simplicity. He wore a tunic of black embroidered with gold ; his turban was yellow ; his sole jewel was a diamond aigrette upon the turban.

He and his compeers received an ovation from the multitude, which his seniors acknowledged with a grave salute ; but Barath flung up his arms like a schoolboy, laughed and nodded familiarly as if he were an old acquaintance of theirs—which made the multitude single him out for more cheers. So it was all along the route ; for a London crowd composed of all classes, out for a holiday with the premeditated intention of being pleasant and the determination to enjoy themselves, is appreciative enough to turn the head of a demigod. In response Barath beamed on them.

Yet with all the laughter and the merriment, ever and anon he cast his eyes ahead, till half-way down Piccadilly he saw a great white building. The balconies and the windows were thronged with people, as indeed were all the houses along the route, from the pavement to the roof. As he came level with the building Barath looked up to a window where a woman was standing with two men; drawing his sword, he raised the blade aloft an instant, and kissed the hilt. The multitude looked up to see who it was to whom he paid such homage.

It was Ellen. She was standing between Wingate and Melnor. The multitude noted her silvery hair—and forgot to marvel why her cheeks were still beautiful and unwrinkled. Instead they opened their throats, and shouted to the sky.

At the end of the route silence came upon the multitude. Outside St. Paul's Barath and his compeers formed a conspicuous portion of the circle that surrounded the Empress. After the service, impressive though brief, the procession started on the return journey: and Barath noticed that the demeanour of the multitude was not quite the same as before. Indeed as cordial as before; but there was also a chastened mood. As if in acknowledgment of the true purpose for which all had come—alike the representatives of the uttermost parts of the Empire, and the representatives of the thrones of Europe, and the multitude themselves. In acknowledgment of that service never witnessed before in English history, and perchance never will be again.

The procession returned to Buckingham Palace by the Embankment. At Whitehall Barath saw tier upon tier of spectators on temporary stands erected along

the route. Some were occupied by school-children : boys in Eton collars and jackets ; girls in dresses of various colours, some all white, some pale pink, some light blue : the sashes on their waists and the ribbons on their hats were generally of the national colours, red, white, and blue. Altogether they formed the most picturesque part of the route.

The boys and girls greeted the procession with shrill cries of joy. Barath smiled on them, and waved his hand. Then he turned and looked ahead. His eyes fell on one of the stands towards the end, a section of which was occupied by girls from the same school, the seniors in front, the little ones high above. Suddenly he sat still, gazing as one in a dream.

In the front row he saw a face that seemed familiar. She noticed his gaze, smiled and blushed. Then she held up her handkerchief and waved it to him. But still he sat silent and motionless, gazing upon her. Unconsciously he might have passed beyond her ; but awaking from his dream, he pulled out his handkerchief from the sleeve of his tunic, and waved it to her. Then he forgot to wave, and sat still with outstretched hand : gazing upon her. The world came between and cut her off from sight. He turned his head before him, and thenceforth saw nothing. The thronging multitude, the sea of faces, the glittering gold, the gorgeous cavalcade—he saw them no more : for his eyes were now filled by a vision that left no room for the glories of the earth. The shouts and cheers of the multitude he did not hear ; for in his ear he heard the echo of sweet words of yesteryear. . . .

On the following day he received a packet late in the evening. The postmark was Eastbourne, the time of

posting the same morning. The writing was unfamiliar, but a strange sense of joy surged within him. There was a letter enclosed in the packet. He read it word by word, fearing to tempt fate by looking too far down the page in anticipation.

“DEAR COUSIN BARATH,—I promised you ~~my~~ photo. I have only just been taken ; so I ~~send~~ you one. I hope you will like it.

“I am quite well, and hope you are the same.—
Your affectionate cousin,

“NORA.

“*P.S.*—How splendid you looked ! I thought just like a brave knight I have read of in some story-book : *true* story. Or was it you who told it to me ? Perhaps I only dreamt it.

“Good-night, dear Cousin ; I am so sleepy. We had to leave London directly after the procession, and reached school very late and very tired. Good-night !—N.”

Barath took out the photo and gazed upon it. It was like the one of last year, and yet different. He could not tell if the similarity or the difference was the greater. The sweetness of the smile on the lips was there, and the liquid softness of the eyes ; but there was something new in the firmer poise of the head upon the neck, and in the greater amplitude of the waves of tresses above the brow. A tendril of hair, rioting in freedom, stole a kiss from her cheek. Glancing down the picture, he saw that the pose of the figure was more graceful, though not necessarily more beautiful than before.

But gazing into the eyes again, he felt that there was something there that was of greater moment : something intangible that he could not see nor define, but vaguely feel. He might have seen it and read it, if the change had amounted to an expression of greater consciousness in the eyes. In reality it suggested an expression of greater emotions, without the consciousness. So all that he realised was that Nora was in some manner different from before, and yet, precious as she had been before, that the sum-total of the change had made her more precious.

Yes, Nora at seventeen was different from the Nora of sixteen—not so much actually as potentially. She was crossing the threshold of a new world ; the kingdoms of which were different from those of the world she was leaving behind ; kingdoms some of which she must traverse, with infinite possibilities as to the things in them she could choose or not choose.

“ Oh, Cousin Nora, a thousand thanks ! ” Barath exclaimed. “ But cousin is so feeble ! Can’t you be something more, dearest ? ” He kissed the foot of the photo in sudden passion.

He had to send some kind of acknowledgment. So he wrote a brief note, saying that the new picture would take the place of the old—and that he still possessed some of the incense. He could not have said more.

He went out to post the letter at a pillar-box near the High Street. He stood before the box, reading and re-reading the address, and at last posted the letter with an ejaculation that was at once a cry of joy and a prayer. He turned homewards, treading on air, with a song in his heart.

Then suddenly he was brought back to the world beneath. He passed a woman in rags. She held a bundle on one arm covered with an old shawl; in the other hand was a bunch of drooping flowers.

"Kind sir, please——"

Barath stopped. She shuffled up and held the flowers towards him.

"Kind sir, please buy a pennyworth of violets."

Barath hesitated. He had been warned against indiscriminate almsgiving—he had no need for the violets. It only served to degrade and pauperise.

She noticed his hesitation. "Kind sir, do buy. I've walked all day and 'ave got only five coppers."

There was a faint cry from the bundle. Yes, it was a child a few months old. But Barath had been told of borrowed babies, to arouse the pity of passers-by and loosen their purse-strings.

On the other hand, the woman had volunteered the statement that she had five coppers. Most of them denied the possession of a penny. Barath felt that her tale *might* be true. His first impulse was to give her all the loose pennies he had, and pass on to save further attention. Then his instinct prompted him otherwise.

"Any money I may give you will only serve for a day," he said to her. "But what of the days when you may get three pence, or two, or none? Why need you do this for a living?"

The woman had never heard three whole sentences from those to whom she had appealed: they had either dropped a penny in her hand in silence, or had passed on in silence.

"My 'usband can't do no work, sir," she said, "as 'e is laid up, and I 'ave children to keep."

"Very well, I shall come with you to see for myself," Barath said. He expected her to make an evasive reply. Instead she acquiesced, though diffidently.

"We 'ave never 'ad a real gent in our parts."

"Never mind that," Barath answered. "Now please lead the way."

She crossed over High Street, went up Church Street, then entered Silver Street. Up to that point Barath knew that he was within the shadow of Kensington Palace, where his Empress had been born. A little narrow turn to the left by Peel Street, then to the right—and he saw what he had never seen before, what his mind had never conceived. A London slum.

And the room he entered had no furniture; for the last had been sold or pawned. On the bare board was a pile of bedding, unclean, evil-smelling. Nay, his nostrils had been assailed by violent odours since he entered the alley; now they almost suffocated him. Yet in this one small room seven people lived, the parents and five children—cooked, ate, slept, and washed their clothes in it when washing was indispensable. On the bedding beside four children lay the father, his right leg rigid and encased in plaster. He was a bricklayer, and had had a fall two months before, which had broken the leg. The woman's story was true.

As Barath gazed, sounds and echoes began to trickle into his ear from the neighbouring rooms and from houses across the alley: sounds of pain and sorrow and sin. As if in a vision, the thin walls grew thinner, then dwindled to nothingness—the veil lifted from before his eyes, and he saw as well as heard. Then in that moment he realised the meaning of the *distant* cries he

had heard in his childhood—not the cries around him in Barathpur, but the cries of anguish from the uttermost parts of the earth that had entered into his heart in the midnight hour. The cries that had made him say to his father that he did not wish to sit upon his throne. . . .

And then, and then, the cries took tangible shapes and filled his startled ear. The wail of a babe crawling up its dying mother's breast for its last sustenance; a drunken curse from somewhere else, followed by a thud and a woman's shriek; the low moan, as of a stricken animal, of a young girl in her teens and in her toils. . . .

Barath emptied his pocket into the woman's hand, and fled from the house.

On reaching home he flung himself on his knees before his bed, and burst into sobs.

“O Brahma, O Parameshwar, O God of the Christians—whichever it be that created me—forgive me! I have sinned—I have thought of my own happiness, not of my mission. Forgive me!”

He arose from his knees, took Nora's photo, gave it one last kiss—at its foot—and put it in a sandal-wood box.

Yes, beside the garland she had once placed around his neck. For the picture would await its destiny with the garland.

CHAPTER XX

VIZIER TO HAROUN-EL-RASCHID

ON the following day Barath went to Wingate and said to him, "Let me see the streets of London where the poor live."

"Wait a few days," Wingate answered. "I have no knowledge of the streets of London, and am not sure that it will be any advantage to you to know them. But our friend, Francis Thompson, is coming to visit us very soon. His advice will be most useful."

To Wingate's surprise Thompson assented without hesitation. He understood the craving at Barath's heart.

"I shall be your guide," he said to the youth. "I know the streets of London well."

"Then I too shall come with you," Wingate replied. "I wish to learn."

But Ellen was troubled for Wingate's sake. "Take care of yourself," she said to him. "Do not go to the worst places, and come back before dark." For his growing infirmities precluded the taking of any risk in any form.

They began with the slum Barath had seen the night before, visited the bricklayer, and inspected a few of the tenements. Admittance was easily gained because of Barath's previous act, and brief though the inspection

was they realised the way the poor lived in the heart of London. One particular case gave them special cause for thought. In passing a room in a basement they found the door half open, and heard a muffled sound from within. The room was almost bare except for some bedding in a corner and a coarse mat on the floor. The mat was piled up high in the middle and was shaking from beneath. Then three little boys crawled out of it—nude.

A neighbour explained. The boys' father was in gaol; the mother had gone out charring, with a babe in arms; she had pawned the boys' clothes, the last thing she could pawn.

"And that is our system in England," Thompson commented. "We punish the guilty father, and thereby punish the guiltless wife and children. Incidentally the tax-payer also, for he has to maintain the criminal."

"I should imagine that some means could be devised to make the criminal do remunerative work and earn his living, with a surplus for his wife and children," Barath answered. "I think we do that in Barathpur with the few criminals we imprison; the rest we flog or forgive. The forgiveness generally suffices to reform the criminal, for there is the certainty of the flogging if it does not. In any case our criminals are not a burden on our tax-payers. But no doubt the circumstances are different here." Which undoubtedly was true in this respect that the British tax-payer was a wonderfully patient creature and bore burden in silence that few others would. . . .

Barath and his companions passed on to other slums; Notting Dale, Latimer Road, Kensal New Town. But withal the signs of poverty or of crime, there was also

a glimpse here and there of silent heroism, of infinite patience, of the truest charity. A young girl relinquishing the one offer of honourable marriage she has received to support and nurse a sick mother ; a drunken animal trampling his prostrate wife with hobnailed boots—and then the woman swearing that she fell over the coal-scuttle, to account for the bleeding lips and the swollen eyes ; a hungry woman sharing her dinner of a kippered herring with a bedridden neighbour ; and among men, a working tailor's assistant, himself labouring with the sweat of his brow from nine in the morning till ten at night, then staying two hours more to finish the task of a sick comrade—and then trudging from Kensal Rise to Battersea before he could get his supper. Why not come to live near his employment ? Because thereby he would have to give up his miserable lodging and thus lose his vote—the one thing that made him feel he was a British citizen, not a galley slave. Reader, you do not know England if you do not know these—notwithstanding the false prophets who bid you look for England outside of England. . . .

The part of London Thompson knew best was the West Central district. They came to it early in the evening, and sought a cheap eating-house in Longacre where one could get a chop or steak, two vegetables and sweet, for tenpence. It was the haunt of the shabby genteel : the broken-down artist unable to sell a picture ; the unsuccessful journalist ; the strolling actor out of employment ; the chorus-girl knocking daily at her agent's, and offered work on terms she could not in decency accept. All these Barath saw and noted, and inwardly realised that their lot was unhappier far than that of the absolute poor ; for they had to hunger while

they put on better clothes to keep the last chance of finding employment. He also noticed a man who looked in at the door hesitatingly, passed on, and re-passed the door a while later.

When they came out of the eating-house, Barath saw the man standing outside. A passer-by, well-dressed, who was about to enter a public-house next door, recognised the man as an acquaintance, and hailed him.

"Sorry to see you are resting, but come and have a drink."

Thompson heard the invitation, and smiled bitterly. "Yes, he is resting, that is, out of an engagement. By the look of him, he is also starving. He may meet several acquaintances who will all offer him a drink, but never dream of suggesting a sandwich. So he has to go on accepting drinks instead of food; and when he has become a physical wreck he will find that he *must* drink to prolong his life, if he feels he has a mission to fulfil and *must* prolong his life at any cost. A little later the drink will not suffice; he will have to take to drugs. And then, when he *has* succeeded in fulfilling his mission and justifying his existence, we shall all wonder how he contracted such bad habits as drinks and drugs!"

Thus spoke Francis Thompson out of the bitterness of his heart. Yea, out of the bitterness of his heart.

They passed on. A couple of turns, and Barath saw a line of carriages moving on and setting down their occupants before a large building. It was the Opera. There was a gala performance that night at the Opera, so the wealth of England passed in array before Barath as he stood by the entrance to watch. He saw the

coronets, the tiaras, and the necklaces, as the women alighted. He did not know that there were really so many jewels in England ; for at State functions the display of jewels was regulated, whereas at the Opera all women could wear all they pleased. Some, the high-born, did not ; they had other possessions besides riches. But to make up for that deficiency in the total splendour, other women, whose ropes of pearls were longer than their lineage, loaded themselves down to the Plimsoll line and would have sunk had they carried an ounce more.

Barath saw and realised. Yes, a thousand times yes : the true aristocracy of all countries are alike—and East and West do meet, everywhere, and at all times, if both are on the highest plane. The greatest nobleman in England may indeed wear the highest decoration possible to an Englishman when he heads the array assembled in honour of his Sovereign—but afterwards walk through the fashionable throng of Piccadilly and St. James's in a garb that a lamp-lighter would scorn. So also the high-born Hindu could wear a king's ransom on his turban—and within the hour divest himself, wear a coarse towel, and stand ankle-deep in the Ganges amid the multitude. So this again was a lesson that stamped itself upon Barath's memory, and brought England still nearer to him.

And then, seeing the wealth of England focussed in that one building, Barath and his companions turned the corner by the amphitheatre entrance, went fifty yards beyond to a narrow lane, and there paused. For this is what they saw :—

A row of small houses, with doors and windows open on account of the heat. The doors begrimed, black,

On the besmeared thresholds women sitting in loose deshabelle, some suckling their babes, some washing clothes, others sewing; a few peeling vegetables and preparing supper: in fine, all driven to live or work in the foul miasma of the alley by the fouler miasma indoors. And that within fifty yards of the back of the Opera where the jewels lay.

A number of barefooted children, ragged and unwashed, were playing in the gutter; for in most parts the children of the poor have nowhere else to play. A heavy cart emerged from a side lane—a little boy darted out at a runaway top, tripped over a girl's skipping-rope, pitched forward, fell between the wheels. . . . Barath had been taught by Moolraj to pick up a fallen sword at full gallop; and a good cricketer can field a ball and hurl it at the wicket with the same motion. Barath flung himself forward with outstretched hand, seized the child by the ankle and jerked him out—so that the hind-wheel only scalped the boy of his cap.

"Enough—please come away," Wingate said with a shudder. He mentally heard the cart-wheel crushing the child's—but enough.

They turned homewards. Barath was thinking. The episode just enacted had stirred him deeply. A great yearning surged within him.

"Would that I were sole ruler of this vast city for twelve months," he murmured.

"What would you do?" Thompson asked. "What could you do?"

"Change all that," Barath impetuously exclaimed, waving his hand before him. They were passing through the heart of Seven Dials, but his gesture seemed to include the Opera also.

“ Would you take the wealth away from the rich and distribute it among the poor ? ”

“ I would not ; the rich may keep what they have. But the poor also have a right to live. Do they live ? ” Barath waved his hand at the crowded rooms where seven human creatures cooked, ate, washed, slept. Then he paused a moment. “ Listen ! ”

It was a woman’s wail ; it came from a room above. She was ill and alone, and was calling to some neighbour who occasionally looked in when she could. Quite a common occurrence. And intermingled they heard the cries of hungry children waiting for their parents to return from work with their supper.

Hearing these, the thought arose in Barath’s mind that perchance some day, in the far future, it might be ordained that after fulfilling his destiny in the East, he might return to the West and there find a new destiny. Perchance. He vaguely yearned that it might. . . . Change all that ? Yes, but how ? Verily he knew not. Yet surely in the hour of fulfilment the enlightenment would be accorded him, if such indeed were his destiny ? He bowed his head, awaiting the call.

But Barath’s experience of London was not yet ended. After leaving Seven Dials they passed through Soho. At a fried-fish shop there was an old woman buying her supper. Her garb was of the poorest, but her voice and accent caught their attention. They paused and looked at a shop-window next door. The woman chatted with the fishmonger, and departed with her supper. Meanwhile the fishmonger had noted the three spectators.

“ She is quite a lydy,” he said to them, with an air of

importance ; “ a perfect lydy. She do me proud to talk as familiar like, being as she is Marie Verner.”

The name aroused dim memories in Wingate’s mind. “ I remember when I was a subaltern in the early ’fifties coming home for my first leave and going to some theatre where an actress of that name drew half of London to her feet. She could have had her choice from a dozen peers. But surely she cannot be this person ? ”

“ She is,” the fishmonger answered. “ And wot’s more, she ’as letters from all of ’em she could sell back to their families for a few thousands. But she won’t. She is a perfect lydy, as I says.”

Here was a drama compressed in a few words. Amid the poverty and the vice that any fool could see around him, there was also the tragedy and the heroism—which Barath did not miss. Yes, he felt sure, there were others like Marie Verner. For their sake alone there was hope for London.

And then, as if to continue the picture of mingled colours, he witnessed a scene a few days later that impressed him greatly. He went with his companions to a Police Court. One would imagine that there, at least, nothing could be seen save the sordidness of life, the lowest depths of degradation to which brutalised humanity could sink. Some of these indeed were made manifest, but afterwards the magistrate divested himself of his judicial character and became the friend and adviser of the poor. They came to him in a ceaseless stream with their grievances, their domestic troubles, their neighbourly disagreements, their personal unhappiness. And the magistrate spoke to each according to his needs : he became the comforter and the peace-

maker, and the father of the poor. Aye, often with a jest upon his lips to hide a tragedy. Forsooth there were fools who heard, who afterwards wrote to the newspapers on the unseemliness of judicial levity; but the fools could not understand the wisdom veiled by the jest and the milk of human kindness on which it was fed. A week-old bride, aged seventeen, seeking separation from her boy-husband of eighteen—and the fools would have the majesty of the law solemnly depicted to them! Instead, a little fatherly advice, a little scolding, a little jest pointing out their folly—and the breach is healed, which no grandiloquence could have done: the recalcitrant bridegroom expresses contrition, kisses his bride in open Court, and the two go home arm-in-arm.

“But what do you do with these men?” Barath asked his companions. “I suppose you occasionally think of giving them a knighthood when they retire from the Bench? In India we would make them kings, for they do the work of kings. The mightiest kings of India sat upon their thrones in the hall-of-public-audience on certain days, so that the orphan and the widowed could come to them and ask for instant justice—without even the six-and-eightpence of the solicitor.”

“That is exactly why we are trying to Europeanise you,” Thompson said, with a laugh. “However, no harm will come to you if you can extract our gold and omit the dross.”

With enlightenment in his heart Barath left the Police Court with his companions, crossed Marylebone Road, came southwards to the Marble Arch on their way homewards, and passed through Hyde Park. There Fate had one more episode in store for them. They

noticed a middle-aged man sitting at the corner of a bench and leaning heavily over the arm, his head turned to the side and hanging over the shoulder. His face was red, the veins on the brow swollen and distended, his breath heavy and spasmodic. Some of the passers-by looked askance at him ; for he seemed to be well-dressed, wherefore his apparent condition was in contradiction to his station in life. A few stopped and whispered.

A constable appeared, attracted by the little group, went up to the man, looked at him, then shook him by the arm to arouse him. But the man was incapable of raising his head ; he continued to gasp for breath, with head bent over the shoulder. Clearly a case of "drunk and incapable." The constable blew his whistle for a comrade.

Meanwhile Thompson had drawn nearer. He had been a medical student at Owen's College, Manchester, before he wrote poetry. With a vague premonition at his heart he examined the man.

"Fetch an ambulance and at once," he said to the constable. The constable and his comrade returned with the ambulance in a few minutes.

"You haven't much time to lose," Thompson told them as they were putting the man in ; "take him to the nearest hospital. And the next time you see a man lurching heavily, do not jump to the conclusion that he is drunk ; he may be merely dying."

With that Parthian shot, that apparent cynicism, Thompson sought to disguise the bitterness in his heart.

And yet, and yet, Fate was kind. It was bent to the last on bringing into juxtaposition scenes and

episodes in vivid contrast—in presenting a picture of London in a bioscope in which the Lord Mayor's Show is succeeded by dust-carts, and the dust-carts by the array of guests going to the aldermanic banquet. So after the bitterness the laughter.

On leaving Hyde Park by the western gate, Barath and his companions came to Kensington Gardens. Being a fine afternoon, a multitude of children in charge of their nurses were playing in the Gardens; they were all prettily dressed and came from the wealthy neighbourhood. Suddenly Thompson recognised a little boy of six, who also saw him and came forward.

“Hullo, Francis!” Thompson said to the child, and took his hand. Then turning to his companions, he said, “This is my god-child; he lives across the road. Francis, this is Colonel Wingate.”

The boy stretched out his hand to Wingate like a man, saying, “Delighted to meet you, Colonel. I know you by reputation, although I was in the nursery when you called on father and mother; but now I can go to the drawing-room.” The polysyllables flowed from his lips without an effort, and his attitude was quite unassumed.

The old soldier nearly had a fit of laughter, but checked himself and shook hands most gravely. He understood that this was the most wonderful little boy in London, who picked up all that he heard from his elders. But when it came to Barath's turn, he could not restrain himself. He stooped down and kissed the child plump on the cheek.

The child assumed an outraged air. “Please don't do that,” he said with a pout. “It is bad enough to be kissed by all the women.”

"Do they kiss you much?" Barath asked, shaking with suppressed laughter.

"They do. They can't leave a man alone."

Thompson exploded. "Come, come, Francis; you mustn't say that just yet, old man." Then to humour him in his manlike attitude, he asked, "Did you go to the Royal Academy with the family? I knew they were going."

"I didn't," the boy answered. "I heard it was nearly all rubbish this year."

"Well, never mind the Academy," Thompson continued. "Have you quite made up your mind now what you are going to be?"

"I am still unsettled," the boy replied thoughtfully. "I know what I should *like* to be—a soldier like uncle, a painter like aunty, and a poet like mother and you."

"Anyway you are going to be very great," Thompson suggested, glancing at the other men.

"Of that there is no probable or possible manner of doubt whatever," the little boy answered with conviction.

"Well, good-bye, old man," Thompson said when the nurse came to fetch the boy. "I shall see you soon."

"Good-bye, Francis," Barath also said; "I shall expect to hear of your greatness when I return to India."

And so this merry encounter with a child put them all in good spirits after their recent chastening and saddening experiences.

And the sum-total of it all, as regards Barath? A deep yearning arose in his heart that some day a great personage might come forth and study London, this world within a world, for its weal. No, not a multi-

millionaire who could only fling his gold about in temporary almsgiving, but some one who would probe the uttermost depths of human thought and human action in tribulation, with power to amend and alter the conditions from which they spring. A new Haroun-el-Raschid, who would combine an intimate knowledge of this Bagdad with a knowledge of Eastern methods of instant action, instant justice, instant retribution, instant reward: perchance one who had walked at night with a single escort through the streets of Delhi and Lahore and Benares. And verily there was such an one in England.

“Would that the Shahzada would be the new Haroun—then I would be his Vizier!” Barath cried in his inmost heart. “Or if he would send his son to Delhi and Lahore and Benares, I would be his Vizier there and in the streets of London.” Which seemed to him a hope possible of future fulfilment—at least, the yearning in his heart was father to the hope.

Yes, he might be intended for a larger scheme of fate, to be revealed to him in the distant future. With the wondrous foresight that he possessed he resolved to spend his remaining years in England in an intense and constant endeavour to perceive and understand and realise all that was humanly possible.

Which he did with success, because of the fact that he was born outside of England and had yet made an Englishman of himself. The best way for a man of keen perception to know England objectively—that is, truthfully—is to be born outside, and then to come in and become an Englishman. By being born outside he will possess the eye for the objective vision—and by subsequently becoming an Englishman he will prove

that after the objective vision of England he loves her still.

This is a simple truth, but a great truth—even though it has been left to an Eastern to discover. I mean Barath, yea, Barath.

CHAPTER XXI

ZUTPHEN

FOR the next two years Barath worked strenuously at College, preparing chiefly for the mathematical Tripos. As there were no great public events, like the Diamond Jubilee, necessitating his participation, he attended only a few social functions in the two years. Ellen might have been tempted to entertain a little on his behalf when they were in town for the season; but Wingate's enfeebled health debarred him from social burdens, and Barath himself protested that she had given him enough and overflowing of opportunities for enlarging his acquaintance. •

In his inmost heart he had another reason for not seeking to go frequently into society; it seemed to him like tempting fate. The minimum number of functions he was compelled to attend might be a part of his destiny, but to seek any more would be to seek peril—the peril of a meeting the very thought of which was heaven itself; but in the thought there was also a terror. Anything might have happened in the two years, and the Nora of seventeen was surely the sweetest and loveliest debutante of this generation at nineteen. It was more than an innate reticence, innate delicacy, that had denied to his lips the very simple and natural inquiry as to what had become of her in these two years :

rather, he had stifled the inquiry in the thought that if they were truly destined to meet again, they would surely meet in the fulness of time, ask or not what he would. He might meet her at any moment, or never. Any drawing-room he entered he might find her within—and as he crossed the threshold there was mingled joy and terror in his heart : joy in the thought of meeting Nora, terror in the thought of the consequences.

Then as several occasions passed, and he did not meet her, he felt a sense of relief—mingled with regret. He was glad he did not see her : the words were undried upon his lips when he wished he could see her. Thus in every social gathering he was forced to gamble with his emotions.

His approaching examination gave him respite. For several months he worked incessantly. His object was not so much to obtain a high place as to understand his subject thoroughly. Now, contrary to popular belief, the Tripos which determines the position of the Senior and other Wranglers, is not the highest mathematical examination at Cambridge ; but Part II. in the following year is, in which success is impossible without originality. A fair mathematician endowed with unlimited receptivity and little originality might be Senior Wrangler, beating a better mathematician possessing less receptivity and more originality. Or, taking two good mathematicians, each capable of answering every paper completely if given unlimited time, the winner will be the one possessing the higher speed in the limited time actually allowed—even though the other be the better mathematician, and with an added half-hour could assert his superiority by completing the paper with a more masterly treatment. The

winner of the Derby may go all to pieces and be beaten when he tries to cover the added three furlongs of the Grand Prix : the Senior Wrangler likewise, when it comes to the severer course of Part II.,

Now, at Cambridge, the authorities generally know in anticipation the first four or five Wranglers of a year. Barath was easily marked out as the winner of Part II. if he chose to appear for it in the following year : but in the previous contest determining the position of the Wranglers there was no certainty. His rival was his friend, Robert Simpson, a splendid mathematician who in any other year but Barath's might have walked away with the highest honours. A serious contest was necessary for Robert because of Barath's mathematical intuition : the wonderful faculty that enables the human mind to jump to the one path out of a possible thousand—then cry " DY by DX ," which is the "Open Sesame" of mathematics—and the door flies open, revealing the hidden gem : whereas most mathematicians could not take the jump, and had to keep on crying " DY by DX " along hill and dale and forest. Moreover, in the higher branches of the science, contrary to popular belief, the actual process of work is simplicity itself compared to the difficulty of finding the right interpretation of the result : and in the interpretation a gift of intuition will save the worker a mountain of useless labour. Merely by noting the perturbations in the motion of Uranus a great mathematician discovers the outer planet Neptune without ever seeing it—because his intuition makes him leap to the conclusion that the outer planet must exist to cause the perturbations, then he clothes the unknown body with probable attributes suggested by his mathematical

perception, and then only does he apply the actual process of calculation and verification, and finally he tells a friend to go and look through a telescope at a point in the heavens where the unknown planet *ought* to be : and the friend does so, and sure enough finds the planet. Such intuition or perception, or call it what we will, Barath possessed.

Robert's tutor told him to practise speed : if he could not jump as far as Barath, he might at least save time by running all the way. Robert demurred. Barath heard of it ; he came to his friend and told him explicitly not to throw away a single chance. Robert owed it to his father to try and be the Senior by every honourable means possible. Barath reminded him of that.

" Why do you hesitate ? Do you think you would be taking an unfair advantage of me by practising speed ? Why, I can do the same—if I want to. Besides, the element of speed is a necessary and implied condition of the exam. Now just go in and beat me if you can. Here's my hand on it."

So Robert locked himself in his room every day for three hours, the exact time allowed in the Tripos for each paper, and answered a paper of a former year ; afterwards his tutor corrected his work. Thus for six months. The tutor was satisfied. Robert was now armed with a weapon as effective as Barath's.

And Barath meanwhile was studying—mathematics ; not speed. Indeed, in most cases it came to the same thing : the thirty seconds he spent at the start in feeling for the shortest path to the solution of a problem often saved him five minutes at the end. On the other hand, if he struck a by-path that promised to open out a new region (and such regions number legions) which also

seemed interesting and important (which usually they are not), he would forsake the problem in question for which marks could be scored and continue his own investigation for which no marks could be obtained.

A week before the Tripos, Wingate had an illness which was not serious in itself, but at his age was capable of engendering dangerous complications. He and Ellen would never have dreamed of disturbing Barath on the eve of his examination ; but Thompson, who had come to see the invalid, understood rightly Barath's feelings and wired to him. For Barath would never have forgiven himself if he remained in ignorance of his guardian's illness. Besides it would be an error of judgment to work till the last moment and run the risk of overtraining. He came up to town forthwith.

"Please tell me his exact condition, if possible ? " he asked the doctor in attendance at the first opportunity.

"In the present case there is no cause for anxiety ; because of timely treatment there is little likelihood of any complications ; in fact, I hope to see him quite well in a few days. What we really have to fear is a second seizure in the future ; for this first will leave him more susceptible to it when it occurs."

"When may that be ? "

"Impossible to say. But I hope not for many months."

Barath inwardly resolved that when that happened he would not run the risk of remaining in ignorance of it.

"Promise me you will wire to me at the first symptoms, wherever I may be ? " he asked Ellen.

"Even if you are sitting for Part II., Dilkhusa—the height of your father's ambition ? "

"It would cease to be my father's ambition if my father's friend were in peril."

"I promise," Ellen answered softly, kissing him to hide her tears.

But the old warrior was not yet laid by the heels. "Sorry you have had to come down unnecessarily, my dear boy," he said to Barath. "Hope it wasn't a nuisance."

"Nuisance, Colonel? Why, I just wanted a little rest from book-work before the exam."

"That's right, my boy, that's right!" the old man cried, sitting up in bed. "Have the repose, then go in and win handsomely, my lad. Ellen, fancy your tucking me in like a baby! A few weeks hence I shall be up in Cambridge before the surging throng in front of the Senate House, leading the cheer when our Barath comes out Senior Wrangler! Eh, my lad?—you lucky dog! Do you know what it is in public estimation to be a Senior Wrangler of England? Why, any undergrad peer would carry your bag or fetch your cap—and feel jolly proud if you married his pretty sister!"

And so the old man went on, much to Barath's confusion, partly to satisfy himself that he was not really ill, partly to induce Barath to try and secure the coveted prize. He had never spoken to Barath like that before, but now a whole array of complex feelings so prompted him. Pride in the coming success of the youth; a sense of possession in that in some sense he stood in the position of a father to him; personal affection begotten in the three years of intimacy; and withal a vague desire to feel he was strong and well, and would live to witness the youth's future triumphs.

Barath was to return to Cambridge the day before

the Tripos. He did no actual reading meanwhile, though at night he glanced at his notes for an hour. Then Thompson would come in for a talk, and the two would exchange ideas on various matters. In the three years Thompson's manner towards the youth had changed considerably : he had become more communicative, and actually talkative for an hour at midnight. Spontaneously he disclosed incidents in his own life, and sometimes thoughts and feelings that he would not have dreamed of revealing to any one else but Barath. Partly because Thompson's friendship for him had now in it an element of affection prompted by the youth's own reverence for the poet ; partly because Barath was an Eastern and could instinctively understand some few of the things said, perhaps better than any one else.

On the night before his departure for Cambridge Barath fell into a fit of abstraction. In such moments he would just scribble a brief while with his pencil aimlessly, then look up suddenly and gaze into any one's eyes that was present, seeing and not seeing : seeing mentally, not physically. On a previous occasion he had thus gazed upon Thompson—and the poet had cried, " Please don't look at me like that ! You make me nervous ! " But now Thompson knew him better : knew the meaning of Barath's own words, that in pain and anguish had he begotten the mysteries, pain alike in seeing things that are painful and in hearing tidings of joy—even as the mother brings forth her child in like pain, whether it be ugly or beautiful.

So that night, as Barath's gaze fell upon Thompson in the fit of abstraction, the poet's heart was stirred in harmony.

"Something is troubling you," he said to Barath kindly.

"Yes, very much. It may be a mere delusion, or something real—I don't know which."

"Then tell it to me," Thompson asked.

"Most gladly," Barath answered in intense relief. "In moments like these I feel I must speak my thoughts, or burst."

"I know," the poet replied. "That is exactly why I am asking you. Now tell me."

"I know not if I have stumbled upon a real discovery—or am deluded by a will-o'-the-wisp. I have a mathematical idea which I cannot interpret in physical phenomena generally much less in human action specifically. It is this: a mathematical function (that is, a quantity dependent upon a variable element) has another function evolved from it; that also has another, and so on. Instead of abstract functions we shall take a graphic example in illustration, for instance a triangle. Now taking any triangle at random, we can evolve from it a second triangle, from that a third, and so on. But of all triangles the equilateral is the perfect type—and the astonishing thing is that, begin with what poor specimen of the species we will, the series of triangles evolved must end in this particular process of mine in an infinite equilateral triangle."

"Wondrous, yet inevitable," Thompson answered in deep emotion. A steadfast Christian, he saw all things with Christian eyes. To him the Infinite Equilateral Triangle was the end of all things—and Barath had found the path that led to it. "Is that a mathematical law?" he asked.

"Absolutely, in the present line of investigation,"

Barath answered. To him at that particular instant the matter was merely of scientific interest—as a sort of mathematical illustration of the theory of evolution, by showing that any given species must ultimately end in the perfect type of that species after an infinite evolution.

“And the successive approach to the perfect type is most curious,” he continued,—“always coming nearer to it, but swinging alternately from side to side. Take a graphic illustration: let this be the line-of-perfection to be ultimately reached. Then if at any stage the distance of the evolute be eight points (or degrees) to the right of it, at the next stage the distance will be only four to the *left* of it; then two to the right; next one to the left; then half to the right—and so on. The oscillation is like the swing of the pendulum in public opinion—except that it comes nearer to the line of concord at the end of each swing.”

“Exactly what should happen in a progressive civilisation,” Thompson answered. “Tell me, have you ever read Kant, the German philosopher?”

“Never.”

“Then let me inform you that unconsciously you have not only rediscovered his great doctrine of human progress, but have also found a mathematical proof of it. However, that is only incidental: pray go on with your main idea.”

Barath continued. “Having found the perfect triangle from the given species, I thought of reversing the process, and working backwards to discover the predecessors of the given triangle. I found that they gradually dwindled down to a point. Hence that point is the original protoplasm from which the whole

series was begotten. In its evolution the point broke itself up into two parts, which, however, remained in contact; these two parts began to oscillate about the point of cleavage, while each elongated at its free end, the length of the oscillation forming the base of the triangle. The true interpretation of these motions as applied to the evolution of species in the physical world I leave to biologists to determine. I merely show the first cleavage and the first oscillation, which together started the original process of evolution."

"Which is useful enough," Thompson commented. "I am not an evolutionist, still I think there are many evolutionists who would like to know the mathematical sanction for the beginning of the process. Why don't you publish it? I see it announced in the *Athenæum* that the First International Congress of Mathematics will be held next year, I believe in Paris. Printed copies of papers must be submitted in French, English, German, Italian, Spanish, and a few in Latin; but there should be no difficulty in your getting the necessary translations."

Barath saw visions. His name would be immortal in Western science. Yes, it was something to have discovered what all Western scientists had been seeking—how the original protoplasm first started its evolution that in time produced all the species of the earth, and ultimately man. Yes, the protoplasm broke up into two parts, though still in contact; the two began to oscillate and elongate. That was the beginning of the animate world.

And yet it vaguely occurred to Barath that this was not his mission: his kingdom was not of the physical world. "I shall consider your suggestion, but cannot

yet decide," he answered Thompson. "I am sometimes tempted to think that I possess the reincarnated soul of Blaise Pascal; for I too have a sister as good as Jacqueline." He said that humbly; though Delini was never to him what Jacqueline had been to Blaise—Jacqueline who at thirteen gave to Blaise his destiny at twelve, by saving her father's head from the wrath of Anne of Austria.

"And so like Blaise Pascal you would give up a world of triumphs in mathematics to find your destiny in Port-Royal," Thompson commented. "I understand you, and will not say nay. Go to Port-Royal; but at least try your best at Cambridge—for the sake of others."

With that admonition Barath returned to College the day before the Tripos. He went forthwith to Robert. He was shocked by the change he saw in his friend in that brief week: Robert's cheeks were hollow, his eyes feverish. Instead of taking a holiday and a respite, he had been working past the midnight hour each day.

"You'll break down," Barath told him.

"I don't care if I do—after the last paper."

"But you are not giving yourself a fair chance."

Robert laughed. "That is my only chance." And as Barath departed, Robert turned in for six more hours of labour.

The next day the candidates sat for the Tripos. Barath had a desk by the wall, near a corner; Robert was placed a dozen seats away, and towards the middle of the hall. As each candidate finished a manuscript book an attendant handed another. Robert wrote four books; nobody else more than three. But Barath gave in the three all the solutions demanded, because of

the shorter steps he used. Afterwards the two friends compared answers. They were both right and complete, and ahead of the others : level among themselves. Thus after the first day.

There was practically no change for the next four days. Barath did not quite finish a paper, but his treatment of the rest was more masterly. And Robert found he had occasionally skipped a step, not because of his speed in writing, but because his eyes were tired, his body weary : his mind saw the step among the others, but forgot to write it down ; because flesh and blood could not stand the prolonged strain to which he had subjected himself.

On the sixth and seventh days both were slightly in fault. It was a terrible race, in which the increasing fatigue each day was not relieved by lighter papers but was flagellated by severer ones. It was as if the Marathon race were run up a slope in which the gradient increased with the distance. In their exhaustion Robert and Barath committed slight errors which they could not have done in the classroom. Their consolation was that the others were committing worse blunders ; or were lagging behind in the answers themselves.

" You won't sit up to-night—will you ? " Barath asked Robert on the seventh evening. " It is not necessary." For on the eighth and last day there would be problem papers in which no immediate reading would be of any avail. In fact a good night's rest and a clear brain in the morning were the best preparation for them.

Robert understood that, and for his own sake, his father's sake, he went to bed without reading a line. But he lay awake far into the night. It was the con-

sciousness of the magnitude of the stake he was playing for that denied him sleep. The last day's problems were intended to be a forlorn hope : a candidate hitherto hopelessly beaten in the race would have the opportunity of making a stupendous effort and regaining the lead—of winning at the very post by a bare neck. Robert might find danger from some despised outsider ; the chance of that, although remote, was always existent ; Robert's best safeguard against it being his present lead and his own frantic plunge to-morrow. But the real peril came from Barath, a peril against which no precaution could be taken. For the problems would be just the very things in which Barath would revel—in which his intuition and flashes of inspiration would lead to solutions before the others were half-way through the mere mechanical work. That was Robert's fear.

The first paper on the last day was within the capacity of both to answer fully. Both did justice to it, each in his own way, so that their relative position was unchanged thereby. It was the last paper that furnished the supremest test.

When the hour came and Robert glanced at the paper a little dumb hope crept into his heart. The questions set were more than could be possibly answered in the three hours allowed : in fact, to obtain full marks for the paper it was necessary to answer only half the questions. Here was Robert's chance to draw level with Barath, or even pass him in the frantic race. Here was an opportunity for pure speed, for doing more than enough for the day's work—for making up for other days' work left undone or done deficiently.

Robert wrote sheet after sheet, book after book. His

pulse was throbbing, his brow hot and feverish, his eyes dilated, his lips now pursed tight in frenzied effort, now opened wide for breath. He felt he might drop at any moment—the pen first fall from his nerveless grasp, then himself sink to the floor in utter exhaustion. With reeling brain he finished half the paper with his sixth book, that is, all that was needed for full marks. He looked at the time : there were fifty minutes more. Fifty minutes in which to help himself to as many marks as possible from the rest of the paper. As if he saw a horde of gems before him, far more than he could physically carry, of which he was allowed to take away as many as he could select in a limited period. At the same time he knew that his rival was allowed a similar liberty, and the biggest collector would win the prize.

He was playing for a kingdom in those fifty minutes ; his kingdom, his father's kingdom. The kingdom which by right of merit should have come to his father and now to him—the last of the house of Simpson, than which there was none more honoured in the annals of British mathematics. He would win that kingdom, should he fall dead the moment after.

And Barath ? He began the paper as was usual with him, not right through down the page, but picking out first such questions as pleased him most. He could not help noticing Robert's rapidity, because the attendant was constantly supplying him with fresh manuscript books. So at last Barath caught the infection—he too was inspired by the spirit of emulation. Without being able to increase his speed, he got to the solution of a problem as quickly by taking shorter paths. In four books he finished all that were demanded, and in about the same time as Robert.

With the fifth book he started the extra problems. One of them interested him particularly, because just as he came to the solution a whole series of successive corollaries dawned upon him in flashes of inspiration. Each of them seemed to open out a new region. He did not mean to explore any completely ; but he set down each result, with complete though crystallised directions for a complete exploration. In doing so he used up the whole of the fifth book. It did not take him long, merely because when he saw in flashes he saw a complete picture which could be reproduced in an instantaneous photograph in some mental camera that he was privileged to possess.

Though it was not necessary to give up any book before the close of time, he handed over the five he had written merely because they did not need any further revision. In doing so, he took the opportunity of refreshing himself with a glass of cold water from the examiner's table, even if thereby he lost a couple of minutes. Then he began the sixth book. There still remained half an hour.

The glass of cold water cleared his vision. In the spirit of emulation his vision had been distorted, magnifying the importance of this examination in comparison with all earth. Now the right perception of things returned to him, the right proportion of the divers elements that made up his life-history. The true relation between this contest and the other joys and sorrows, triumphs and tribulations, of life dawned upon him. Forsooth, but for the spirit of emulation, it might have done so all along. Now the cup of cold water quenched the gladiatorial fire in his heart—so unnecessary to one who was already gifted by fate and

armed beyond his rivals—and restored to him his truest judgment, his fullest wisdom. Yea, that very fact might have served to arm him yet more terribly against his rivals in a contest the very nature of which demanded the supremest judgment, the supremest wisdom. But it also awakened his fullest perception as to the value attached to the glories and triumphs of man over man.

The attendant came to Robert with the ninth book ; and without a moment's loss Robert plunged into it. Barath could not help having his attention drawn to it, because indeed all the other competitors noticed the number of manuscript books consumed : in fact, a mild sensation was created among them by what was known to them to be a new record. Robert alone was unconscious of the general gaze that was turned to him, even though for only a few seconds ; with frantic haste he rushed on in the race for time, oblivious of the world.

But Barath had seen more. He continued to gaze upon Robert. The veil lifted from before his eyes—and for the first time in that prolonged struggle he saw Robert as he actually was in that moment, Robert in the body, Robert in mind and heart. In the body it was all too evident now. His hollow cheeks were more hollow, his sunken eyes sunken deeper, their lustre unnatural as in rising fever. The sweat of labour stood in beads upon his brow. In that last half-hour the whole face had grown pale and haggard and emaciated, and was lined with deep furrows of a leaden hue. The six months of incessant toil, the eight days of frenzied conflict, of impassioned hope alternating with abysmal despair, had done their work.

As Barath gazed and saw and realised, something smote him in his heart. Still he gazed, and the face of

his friend seemed to recede in a distant mist. Then out of the mist another face was dimly outlined before him, like Robert's face, but not his. Slowly it formed itself before Barath's eyes—and then he saw and recognised it. He gazed upon it in the dreamy subconscious manner into which he sometimes lapsed in moments of deep emotion—and the face of Charles Simpson returned the gaze out of the mist. His eyes rested upon Barath as if yearning to convey some message across the void of half the earth, but was denied the power of communication and could only gaze and yearn—as if trying to remind Barath of some forgotten duty, some forgotten mission, some supreme act for which the hour had come and was passing away. Forsooth, in the years gone by, when looking up from his work in a mood of abstraction, Barath had sometimes met his tutor's gaze ; but now there was something more in Simpson's gaze that smote him in his heart.

“His need is greater than yours.” Yes, the words of three years ago rushed back to Barath's memory, the words of his tutor's letter to him in his first days at Cambridge. Then also there surged to his heart the words of many years before, when Viswa-mitra had taken him to the Raj-Kumar College. He remembered what Viswa-mitra had said of his tutor : the high honour Charles Simpson might have attained if he could have remained in Europe. He also remembered his tutor's own hope that some day his son, Robert, might regain the lost honour, regain what was his by birthright—for which they had laboured, father and son, and so far had laboured in vain. Yes, a thousand times yes ! Robert's need was greater than his !

“To you it would be but one more triumph. To him it would be the hope of his lifetime, the one chance of fulfilling his one destiny.”

Yes, a thousand times yes! The hope of the house of Simpson was no small hope. The founder of the house of Simpson two centuries ago was the representative of British mathematics of his time; so the heritage of six generations cried out for justice and for restoration to its rightful heir. Heir by descent—aye, and purchaser also by the sweat of his brow.

O Brahma—O Vishnu—grant him a sign! . . . But lo!—the sign was there already! In the very paper before Barath there was a question which he had answered and delivered in the fifth manuscript book—the book he had practically devoted to one problem and the series of corollaries inspired by it. And that problem was based upon a discovery of the founder of the house of Simpson, and was named after him. Yes, the name seemed to stand out in letters of fire in the paper before him. It had been without significance before; now it was an answer to his thoughts. . . .

What was earth to him and all its triumphs? A shadow of a shadow. Its richest prize might be thrust into his hand: if he closed his fingers he would find but emptiness—save the ashes of regret; perchance eternal regret and disillusionment. In that hour as he gazed at the paper, he seemed to have a vision of all the elements of man's existence in a single picture. Thus he saw a complete mosaic of the world's joys and pains, triumphs and failures, and the laughter bought with the tears of others. Would he mount to heaven upon the dead bones of others? Then that heaven would be a hell.

He continued to gaze at the paper. The pen dropped from his hand. He heard it fall, but heeded it not. There he sat motionless whilst the clock crept on with thievish hand stealing the precious time : he heeded it not. He was conscious, quite conscious, of what he was doing. Some subtle joy awakened to life within him, a sense of peace and comfort and happiness. Yet withal, there was a divine frenzy to do something and gain a supreme end by just sitting motionless and doing nothing. And then there arose in his heart a song of joy, a song of triumph. It was also a song of peace that seemed to soothe him, to lull him to rest. He felt a vague yearning to lay his head on a pillow, and sleep, sleep, sleep. . . . No, not on a pillow—but on Ellen's knees, as he sat at her feet. In vague fancy he drooped his head as if indeed it rested there—felt her kiss upon his brow, lulling him to sleep. . . .

And then the hour passed, and he awoke from his dream. The mist in which he had last seen his tutor's face, was not all faded. Charles Simpson's face had receded, but instead he saw another. His own father seemed for a brief instant to stand before him ; and in the one glance in which their eyes met he received from his father a message of love.

"My son, this is thy victory !" He heard the words in his dream, in the last moment of its ending. And then the world awoke around him, buzzing with life after the long pent-up restraint. He awoke with the world and surged out with the throng, having no other thought or care.

For he had no book to deliver.

On the memorable day when a vast multitude of

students, and their relatives and friends, thronged before the Senate House to hear the Wranglers proclaimed, Robert stood aside with his heart in his mouth. A great shout went up when the names were read, but Robert did not hear. Barath seized his hand and wrung it, and gave a mighty yell—he did not know he could yell like that—which brought to notice Robert's standing-place apart, and fetched the others.

Dazed and bewildered, Robert could not believe that he had won—that Barath was second. He asked Barath to assure him that he was awake. The assurance came the moment after. The crowd of men reached the two friends, and, with a yell unheard of between the Mississippi and the Saskatchewan by all the heroes of Fennimore Cooper, they fell upon Robert and raised him shoulder high. They carried him round the Senate House and to his rooms, emitting noises. Barath emitted more noises than any, because he had a big pull over his comrades in having a first-class menagerie outside his father's palace. The sounds he had heard there came back to him at the vocal outburst of joy at his friend's triumph, and he easily beat the variety of his comrades' noises by doing the grey hyena—which none other could.

Later in the day, when the Master and the Dons were congratulating Robert, the chief examiner sent for Barath. This man was also the principal professor of mathematics in the University, and was of universal reputation because of his researches.

"There are a few things in your papers which induce me to speak to you personally for your future guidance," he said to Barath. "In several solutions you have

indicated collateral inferences which might repay further investigation, but which were not asked for in the papers. Personally I should have liked to give you credit for them, but could not do so from the nature of the contest. In the last paper, however, you did something which aroused my interest and at the same time indicated how you lost the opportunity of securing the highest place. In the very last question you answered, to which you devoted an entire book, you were asked to solve a problem originally based upon a simple deduction from Simpson's Theorem—namely upon the principle that the two Simpson-lines of the extremities of the diameter of a circle intersect at right angles. From that you immediately jumped to a general conclusion that the Simpson-lines of any two points on the circumference intersect at the angle of the included arc. Jumping to a general law by sheer induction from a solitary fact is foolish; but the marvel is that you were right. Then you went further, and rightly inferred that the Simpson-lines of any number of points at an equal distance along the circumference must intersect at equal angles. Finally, as these points might be taken as close as one pleases, you leaped to the mental picture of a single point revolving with equal velocity along the circumference, and its Simpson-line sweeping out equal angles in equal times. That was magnificent, but not war. No marks could be obtained for these inferences, as they had no direct connection with the required problem, but only with its basic principle—whereas the time devoted to them might have been profitably spent in answering the rest of the paper."

He did not know that Barath had had a half-hour

to spare after he had finished that book. Barath made no defence and was silent.

“Thus, I feel sure, you lost your opportunity,” the examiner continued. Then, looking at Barath’s face, something urged him inwardly: his voice grew soft and gentle, and was tinged with a note of affection, of vague yearning. He would, if he could, be Barath’s further teacher; there is a parental joy in imparting one’s mind to one younger, and a craving for fatherhood in genius. But he felt that there was one greater than he—one more worthy to be father to the fullest birth of Barath’s mentality—and in relinquishing this parental joy for himself he could not disguise the regret in his voice.

“Finish here as quickly as you can, and take Part II. Then go to Paris, to Poincaré. He takes no pupils, but I shall gladly write to him and recommend you. A true seer, a true prophet, a true *rishi*, should take a faithful disciple seeking to learn at his feet. Poincaré is our seer. I have authority in mathematics at Cambridge, and say to one ‘Go,’ and he goes—and to another ‘Come,’ and he comes: but Kelvin is greater than I in these Isles. But even as I am to Cambridge, and Kelvin to Great Britain, so Poincaré is to Kelvin and me. In the domain in which Kelvin and I labour as hewers of wood and drawers of water, Poincaré reigns supreme as a king; and the entire investigation of the physical world in the next generation must be carried out on the lines he has laid down. For everywhere in his investigations he opens out a thousand by-paths leading to new regions, which the next generation must explore. Go to him—yes, go to him! He will rejoice to see you with something of his own perception.

He will play a new Descartes to your Pascal. Go to him ! ”

“ My kingdom is not of the physical world ”—the words escaped from Barath’s lips. Though he did not mean to utter them. It was the thought in his heart that involuntarily shaped itself into words. “ Port-Royal, not Paris.”

The examiner looked at him in silence. It seemed a long, long while, before he spoke. In knowing Pascal, he also knew Port-Royal, but was trying to conceive what it could imply in an Indian destiny. “ Perhaps I understand, perhaps I do not. But go to Paris first. Then, if you will—to Port-Royal.”

CHAPTER XXII

WINGATE'S PROFESSION OF FAITH

WINGATE was disappointed at the result of the Tripos ; but Barath seemed so contented and happy that he had not the heart to show his disappointment. Besides, Thompson, who had now come to understand Barath's motives, conveyed to the Colonel in general terms that Barath perhaps had no personal concern with academic honours. Wingate made a mental note of the suggestion.

In the long vacation that followed Barath persuaded Wingate to supplement his usual residence at Boscombe by spending a few weeks at inland health resorts, such as Bath, Harrogate, and Droitwich. Though mentally vigorous, the old warrior was declining rapidly in body, and Ellen and Barath saw the advantage of keeping him in salubrious places throughout the year, with a change of surroundings at intervals. Thus the summer passed ; but now Wingate became less tractable. He staunchly declined to go to the Riviera, or anywhere else out of England.

"If I have to die, I shall die in my own bed," the old soldier avowed decisively. "And, what is more, I don't intend to die whilst I have a cartridge left in my pouch."

All that they could persuade him to do was to go to

Brighton, Torquay, and the Scilly Isles, with periodic returns to Boscombe. The Scilly Isles were particularly serviceable, because, owing to an offshoot of the Gulf Stream, their climate was nearly as warm as that of the Riviera. Moreover, they had the advantage of being within a few hours' reach of London in case of urgent medical need.

In midwinter, when Barath should have been specially preparing for Part II. of the *Tripas*, he continued to run down from Cambridge and spend a few days at a time with Wingate and Ellen. He said that no further preparation was needed beyond what he had already undergone. The Colonel, who had occasional flashes of vivid recollections of the past, now perceived the possible meaning of the words he had heard on Barath's name-day, pointing to some special work in the youth's future scheme of life: his career would not be altogether cast on material lines, even as the ideal ruler of a State aspiring to the highest standard of material progress. Wingate's own thoughts grew more and more spiritual. Then he received something in the nature of a shock.

Barath had stumbled upon a fact not generally known in Europe. In reading Arnold's *Light of Asia*, he saw at a glance that the author was indebted to Asva-Ghosha, the biographer of Buddha, for the main facts of his subject, which indeed was obvious to all scholars. But Arnold's reason for putting his narrative into the mouth of a Buddhist priest was missed by many.

"The reason was simple," Barath explained to Wingate. "The signs at Buddha's birth were not signs of divinity but of future Buddhahood, and are found in Pali writings almost contemporaneous with

Buddha. Asva-Ghosha, being a devout Buddhist priest, naturally wrote as such : consequently Arnold saw the advantage of adopting his method, and thus put the narrative of *The Light of Asia* into the mouth of a Buddhist priest to make it more impressive."

Wingate, though not actually unwell, was reclining on a sofa, where indeed he had to pass most of his waking hours. He sat up at Barath's words.

"That interests me greatly, though indirectly," he said. "So not only Buddha did not claim divinity, but, moreover, the signs of sacred birth as described by Asva-Ghosha and Edwin Arnold implied something less. That relieves my mind of a doubt that has sometimes assailed it. Then did Asva-Ghosha invent those signs in attributing them to Buddha ?"

"He did not," Barath answered, "for the simple reason that they are mentioned in earlier Sanskrit works as occurring at the birth of Krishna."

"And the earlier Sanskrit writers ? Did they invent them in regard to Krishna ?"

Barath was embarrassed. "They professed not to ; in fact the original chronicler claimed to be a contemporary of Krishna and to describe facts within the knowledge of many. Unlike Buddha, Krishna actually claimed divinity : in fact, that he was an incarnation of Vishnu, the second person of the Trinity, and therefore partly human and partly divine."

"Was the claim admitted by his followers in his lifetime ?" Wingate asked.

"It was."

The former doubt or temptation, call it what we will, returned to Wingate's mind with redoubled force,

and in a subtler form. But he would know the truth at any cost. "Describe the signs and other conditions of Krishna's birth."

"I can only do so in the manner of the Sanskrit chroniclers," Barath answered.

Thus he narrated Krishna's birth even as Vashista did to Viswa-mitra, as mentioned in the first chapter of this book. When Barath came to the various attempts on the life of the infant Krishna, and the slaughter of the babes in Gokula, Braja, and the neighbouring cities, Wingate was deeply disturbed.

"Enough!" he exclaimed. "But tell me: was this Massacre of the Innocents actually chronicled by a contemporary writer?"

Barath answered without hesitation: "To be mathematically truthful it was not chronicled *as such* by the contemporary writer. He merely described the details of the various attempts. Subsequent writers generalised from them, and narrated them in the form you denote as the Massacre of the Innocents."

"Subsequent merely to Krishna's lifetime, or subsequent to Christianity?"

"I am uncertain," Barath answered. "Perhaps to Christianity."

Wingate clutched at the hope. "Then that may account for the similarity!" he exclaimed in relief, thus indicating the nature of the doubt or temptation that had assailed him.

Barath was silent. He was happy in having relieved Wingate's mind of its original doubt regarding Buddha: to instil a subtler doubt in regard to Krishna would be not only ungenerous but unjust. He was content to be mathematically truthful, without seeking to apply

qualifications in themselves fair but which would tend to spoil the effect of the strictest truth.

On Wingate's part the desire to know the absolute truth, so far as was humanly possible, was paramount. But there was danger even in that knowledge ; in fact, a man of less mental stability, a Christian less confirmed in his faith not only by professed belief in its dogmas but also by actual practice of its noblest ideals, might have had the foundations of his faith shaken by Barath's words, brief and simple as they were. Aye, lesser Christians have lost their faith by dabbling in mysteries beyond their wisdom, and have found nothing to replace it—which is really illogical. To Wingate the peril was more complex. It lay not in the possible loss of faith, or even the substitution of faith, but in the co-ordination of faith. A man in the evening of his life may be tempted to clutch at every hope—to clutch at every plank he sees, so that one or other of them may bear him to the Unknown shore. Wherefore it was inevitable that afterwards Wingate's mind should at least dwell upon Barath's words, and after a full consideration adopt some attitude consistent with the sum-total of his knowledge.

He asked many questions of Barath regarding Hindu ideals, which the young man answered with the utmost veracity, even using qualifications that understated his case, lest otherwise he should overstate it even by suggestion. These conversations were almost constant while Barath was with him, and were resumed at his return from Cambridge at short intervals ; for he frequently came for the week-end. And in lieu of Barath Wingate had Thompson's society when in London, and occasionally in the country. Their conversation like-

wise assumed a moral and spiritual aspect : formerly Wingate had been content to listen to Thompson on intellectual matters, being too modest to express any opinion himself ; but now a more vital issue seemed to be involved in which Wingate felt that to arrive at the absolute truth not only the wisdom of other minds was necessary, but he must also remove his own possible errors by stating his views. Thompson was well able to give him enlightenment, because his poetry was full of Christian ideals ; moreover, at that very time he was contemplating a prose work embodying some of these ideals. Thus Wingate had the unique advantage of the aid of two such men as Barath and Thompson, each a faithful and sufficient exponent—Barath of Hindu ideals, Thompson of Christian.

In this manner the winter passed ; and then suddenly Wingate had a relapse—as indeed had been anticipated by his physician. All through the winter, with loving care Ellen had insisted on having his bedroom artificially heated at night, notwithstanding the old man's protests. Then about the middle of March there came a day of hot weather ; marvellous to narrate, it lasted. The sun was blazing hot as in July. On the third day men came out in flannels and straw hats. Wingate hesitated no more ; he came to town for this early summer, and discarded fires and hot-water bottles. The first day in town, the fourth of the spell, was the hottest at midday. Then at six in the evening a violent thunderstorm broke out, followed by a heavy downpour of rain. The temperature dropped ten degrees in an hour, and ten degrees more by eight o'clock when the wind had veered from south to east. The rain degenerated to a drizzle by nine, but showed symptoms of sleet. Both

continued spasmodically till eleven, and then ceased. Wingate had already retired for the night.

Some hours later he woke up, shivering. He looked at his watch by the night-light, saw it was two o'clock, and decided not to bother any one. Had he pulled up the blind and looked out of the window, he would have seen three inches of snow outside the sill. Instead he returned to bed.

The next morning he was in a high fever, by noon delirious. When Barath arrived in response to Ellen's telegram, the heart seizure from which Wingate had suffered the previous year had returned. The specialist in attendance shook his head in response to Barath's inquiries, and found it impossible to express hope in anything more than general terms.

"The conditions prevailing to-day," he said, "may be changed to-morrow."

"For better, or for worse?" Barath asked.

"For either. And the liability to important changes may last several days. That is all I can say now."

The specialist ordered a trained nurse, as the task was too serious for Ellen's unskilled hands. Ceaseless care was taken of the patient, and there was a dawning hope when the delirium was followed by sleep. The nurse was replaced by a colleague at night; but Ellen insisted on taking a short watch when the patient was asleep, as then there was nothing more to do except watch and awake the nurse in case of need.

Wingate's sleep was long, and lasted till the next morning. A slight movement on his part brought the nurse in charge to the bedside. Wingate was quite conscious, and she instantly detected the look of surprise in his eyes as he saw her strange face and professional

garb. She stepped back at once and called Ellen. Without giving the patient time to speak, Ellen tried to soothe him with gentle words to avoid alarming him.

"You have had a little relapse, uncle dear," she said, smoothing his pillow, "but you must be very quiet and must not speak. We have a couple of nurses just to take care of you till you get better."

Wingate muttered something about treating him like a baby, not realising the seriousness of his affliction, but obeyed nevertheless when told that he must remain in bed for a few days; for having once commanded, he knew how to obey.

The illness passed through various phases. He had a few hours of sleep generally, but the period of wakefulness was variable: sometimes he was fully conscious, and therefore silent; sometimes partially conscious and inclined to be fractious, and with some difficulty persuaded to obey the injunction to silence; and occasionally quite delirious. It was the recurrence of these moments that caused the gravest apprehension; he would babble ceaselessly till utterly exhausted, and sink into a torpor that had not the soothing effect of sleep.

Thus a few days passed, when the rally to full consciousness was occasionally repeated, but at longer intervals; and the period of delirium or torpor grew more frequent and more prolonged. Friends and relatives called, such as were in town or near town, but few were permitted by the physician to see him; those abroad or in remote parts of the country sent messages to Ellen of mingled hope and sympathy. She reserved the kind inquiries for communication to the patient at lucid intervals, but only in general terms—unless he

himself mentioned the name of some dear relative or friend. She and Barath were ever on the watch for these intervals of full consciousness, brief as they were, in case he remembered some long-forgotten communication that he now wished to make, some last message to give as yet undelivered. For he was sinking slowly but inevitably.

In delirium he babbled like a child on trivial matters, though indeed they served to reveal the simplicity of his heart, its humility, its tenderness ; and if they also made confessions they showed how little there was to confess. But a moment came when a wave of successive emotions and memories swept over him, and the babble was no longer that of a child. He called Ellen and Barath, not knowing that they were sitting on either side of him ; and then his thoughts passed on to earlier days. He talked in Hindi as if speaking of the Vedas to some Indian pundit ; in English, repeating some conversation with Viswa-mitra on Indian affairs, political social, moral, or religious. And now some particular episode, some particular scene, came back to his memory.

"Barath, the son of Barath, thou shalt be," he said in Hindi. "O babe, mine eyes have seen the signs of sacred birth, but the fulfilment of their promise I shall never see, dying too soon. Thou, O babe, art destined to be the teacher of thy teachers." The scene continued, but now he spoke in English. "Some day the child will grow up. *Gurus* and teachers he will have here. But send him to England. I would be his guide and guardian."

Hearing these words, Barath buried his face upon the bedsheet, his lips kissing the old man's hand.

The scene changed. Wingate saw a vision of the days

of his early manhood. His lips whispered a woman's name. "Yes, darling, I shall come back from India, winning my spurs : wait for me !" Thus he pleaded anew the one love of his heart. . . . And awhile after he mentioned another name, a boy's name, in a voice broken with sorrow and compassion. "I promise—before God I promise—I shall be a father to your child."

Then the unshed tears, so long and so bravely held back, rushed into Ellen's eyes. She kissed the dying man's face, sobbing passionately. For twenty years she too had cherished in silence the memory of the one love of her heart, and now the one human tie that bound her to it was about to be sundered. . . .

When the end was at hand there was one caller whom the physician had to admit. Both Wingate and Ellen had been faithful members of the Church of England, and constant communicants. The vicar of their parish church, who lived quite near, and who had asked to be informed of signs of returning consciousness, came when so informed, and was taken to Wingate. The clergyman exhorted him to put his trust in the Lord Jesus, as he might have done to any Christian. Wingate listened with the docility of a child. The vicar prayed, and Ellen, kneeling beside him, gave the responses. The dying man's lips moved, but inaudibly. And all the time Barath knelt on the other side of the bed, holding the Colonel's hand, and said not a word.

Afterwards he had to leave the room, as the nurses excluded everybody when performing their duties. The clergyman talked awhile with Ellen in the drawing-room before departing, and Barath saw him to the door.

"I shall come again to pray with him," the vicar said.

Then something surged up in Barath's heart and loosened his tongue. "Oh, sir, that is hardly necessary. A thousand prayers, a thousand deeds, are his karma."

Wingate fell into a state of semi-consciousness in which he remained till evening, and may have even slept a little. Then he suddenly rallied : his eyes were quite clear and undimmed, as if in convalescence ; the feverish sweat on his brow had dried, and his face was cool ; his voice, though low, was distinct and full of its former mellowness. He called Ellen and Barath—who were always in sight or within call—and thanked them in such words that they could scarce restrain their tears. Then hearing that Thompson was in the house—that indeed he had hovered about for several days—he wished to see the poet. Thompson took the old man's hand in his tenderly, but did not speak. In that moment they understood and thanked each other in silence.

Seeing each other, holding each other's hand, the memory of their last conversation came back to them—and Wingate remembered the enlightenment he had received from the poet. His mind was now clearer than it ever was before : for it partook of the intuitive vision of those on the threshold of eternity. He gave his other hand to Barath, and spoke to him in a voice full of the deepest emotion.

"I see England's peril in India. Barath, Barath, promise me—in the hour of England's peril you will judge her generously ? Generously for the intention if you cannot for the deed ? For the sake of your own belief in your possible former birth in England ? Re-

member your words when you felt that wave of memory in your early days in England—that you had seen the self-same things before, the lilac and the laburnum, perchance in a former birth ! ”

Barath sank on his knees, kissing his guardian’s hand. “ For the sake of that memory, of that possible former birth, and a thousand times for your sake and my new mother’s sake, and the sake of others, I promise. Generously for the intention, justly for the deed. Before God I promise ! ”

Having given that promise upon which the fate of all earth might yet depend, he arose from his knees. Realising the supreme importance of that moment, he stepped swiftly to the foot of the bed, while Ellen took his place. She kissed the dying man’s brow and cheeks, keeping back all but a single tear that rested upon his face.

In that moment Wingate held Thompson’s hand and Ellen’s hand—and was strengthened and comforted. Thompson, from whom he had learned his highest ideals : Ellen, in whom he had seen them fulfilled. Thus he was comforted and strengthened in his faith. Holding their hands, he raised himself with a last effort, his voice clear and full and strong :—

“ I die in the faith of Christ ! Knowing of Krishna and Buddha, I die in the faith of Christ. They were Thy precursors—Thou the destined Saviour ! It was but the yearning of the Hindu *rishis*’ hearts to see the signs of prophecy fulfilled in Krishna that made them see the fulfilment. But the fulfilment was reserved for Thee, O Christ Jesus, my true Saviour ! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit ! ”

Thus died Wingate, who had practised Christianity a

thousand times and had followed the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. And of those that bore testimony to his dying profession none rejoiced more than Barath : yea, Barath. For in his judgment Wingate's dying profession was but the completion of a thousand karmas—a thousand streamlets that flow into the self-same Ganges and thence to the self-same ocean of eternal peace.

CHAPTER XXIII

THOMPSON'S "PARSIFAL"

SOME men are fated to leave an impress of their deeds not only in life, but also in death. The death of Colonel Wingate was fated to complete Barath's growth in manhood. This great change was mainly brought about by two conspicuous factors.

First, the elements associated with his guardian's last moments. The dying man had made his profession of faith in Christianity, spontaneously, when perchance the world might have expected something totally different. The manner of his guardian's death was in Barath's estimation the finest tribute paid to Christianity by mortal man ; and his dying profession, with the fullest knowledge of Krishna and Buddha notwithstanding, was in Barath's judgment worth more to Christianity than all Paley's evidences and all the works of all the divines of Europe—inasmuch as that profession was the inevitable consequence and the last completion of Wingate's karma. Realising that proof of Christianity, Barath was confirmed in his own faith—which again was a result totally different from what the world might have expected : for he saw in it the confirmation of the inexorable law of karma which, together with reincarnation, was the alpha and the omega of his faith.

Thus the manner of his guardian's death served to complete Barath's growth in the fullest manhood, by bringing his moral perception to its fullest maturity.

The other factor was the special circumstances that followed. There was the bond of affection between Barath and Ellen. His residence in England was coming to an end, and the day was at hand when he must bid farewell to England and to Ellen, perhaps for many years, perhaps forever. In the short time that remained there were many material duties to perform; and in their accomplishment the sole consideration he kept in view was to think out, plan out, and anticipate Ellen's needs and wishes, and even arrange for matters that seemed to require a remote preparation. Relatives, friends, and advisers assisted, but Barath was Ellen's messenger and her spokesman.

After seeing his guardian laid to rest, the first duty was to arrange for the disposal of the Kensington house according to the Colonel's last wishes, provided Ellen consented. The house was full of tender but sorrowful memories to her, and her uncle had rightly deemed that after his death its associations would be too painful for her to bear. Yet with half her heart she would fain cling to it.

"Yes, tell them I consent," she said to Barath, with a sigh, gazing wistfully into the square beneath. The evening sun shone on the stained-glass window of the chapel of the Convent opposite where a body of French nuns dwelt, but which also contained many Englishwomen. The bell was ringing the "Angelus," and hearing it something surged up in Ellen's heart—and gushed up to her eyes in a flood of tears: but in the

tears there was a solace and comfort she had not felt before. Indeed a few years before, when Barath had not come and she felt in her heart that dumb, indefinable craving for motherhood, she had once passed by the Convent chapel as the door had been opened by a visitor, and the sound of voices had reached her ear. Attracted by it, she had entered the portion of the chapel open to the world—and had heard the nuns singing the “Magnificat” in a melody which she had never thought could be heard from an earthly choir: with which she had often soothed herself to sleep, trying to recall it to her ear, and when recalled had found her pillow wet with tears—but tears of comfort and of joy, as if her own heart had sung some “Magnificat” in the midnight hour.

And then—and then—following the rays of the sun her eyes crossed over the square and rested on the building opposite, which by the decree of fate contained an Anglican sisterhood—but without the “Angelus” or the Solesmes chant of the “Magnificat” and the “Benedictus.” In that moment the Convent bell ceased to ring, having completed its brief message. And then the comfort died out of Ellen’s heart. . . .

But lo! looking beneath, she saw a woman with bowed head swiftly crossing the square, from the sisterhood to the Convent. Her hair was grey, but not altogether from years. Was she some woman like unto Ellen in heart, in deed, in tragedy? Had she for twenty years dwelt in the sisterhood seeking comfort? Hearing with a yearning heart from across the little square the “Angelus,” the “Magnificat,” the “Benedictus” calling to her and sending her a message of peace—hearing it for twenty years, doubting, hoping,

yearning, and at last had she arisen in response and had gone forth to find rest? Perhaps. . . .

These thoughts may have opened a new channel in Ellen's mind; the human heart is most susceptible to new impressions at moments of sorrow and when oppressed by a sense of loss; even the discarded lover, erstwhile ardent, will throw himself into the arms of the first woman of his acquaintance who comforts him. Ellen's character was indeed more steadfast, and would not be swayed by passing sentiments even in the moment of the deepest loss. Her loss was truly great because Wingate had been not only an uncle and adopted father to her, but also the one tie with the past tragedy of her life: and regarding Barath, who must soon leave her, he had in some manner satisfied her maternal instinct. In contemplation of this double loss, as she gazed across the square the sense of comfort and of peace in hearing the Convent bell and the flood of memories that awakened with it may indeed have made some impression upon her heart, to develop unconsciously and present a full picture in due time of a scheme of life in which alone she could find rest: nevertheless the inspiration or temptation, call it what we will, was not sufficient to influence her present action.

Nor indeed was there need for it, as the immediate future was already determined. A dozen relatives, near and remote, were at her service. To cheer her loneliness her three married sisters induced her to promise to come to them in turn, and dwell with them as long as she chose; moreover, she was to stay with Melnor, her brother, at his country-house for a part of the year. As for the next few weeks, she was to live at Boscombe, where one of her sisters was coming to visit her. The

Boscombe house it was resolved to maintain intact : Wingate, though not wealthy, had provided sufficient means for her to do so, and in that quiet seclusion she could gather round her from time to time those dear to her, her nephews and nieces—and, Wingate's vision reaching far into the future, she could there have around her their children and children's children.

So Barath escorted Ellen to Boscombe, and stayed with her till her sister arrived. Then he returned to London and took charge of the Kensington house, pending its disposal. At Wingate's request Francis Thompson was to make it his home also till then. So now the two men came together, and each felt it might be for the last time. Both were busy by day, Barath preparing for his final examination, Thompson forced to devote himself to the journalism that was using up his genius and sapping his life-blood. It was at the midnight hour, as before, that they met. It would be impossible to record all the expressions of their thoughts, but it is necessary to chronicle their last conversation—necessary for Thompson's sake, wherefore for England's sake. The sale of the house was completed, and on the following day Barath was to return to Cambridge, and Francis Thompson to his—garret. They met the night before in Thompson's room.

Some present-day critics have said that by that period of his life Francis Thompson was past all serious work, and that he only awaited the hand of death to release him from a life of prolonged physical martyrdom. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Racked with physical pain he occasionally was ; but his mind was perhaps at its clearest phase, his perception keenest, his judgment most matured ; at least such was his

belief. His imagination alone may not have reached such heights as before, under similar conditions. But given any favourable moments of inspiration, it was their rarer occurrence rather than the actual failure of imagination that limited the possibility of doing creative work of the highest order. In such moments he would record his themes in a humble exercise-book; and in time a dozen such penny books contained the highest thoughts and inspirations of the greatest English poet of this age.

That night he showed them to Barath, silently yearning for the mere material circumstances and physical conditions necessary to clothe them into coherent or independent works. Barath marvelled. In his frequent conversations with Thompson he had mentioned before the leading Sanskrit poets, among others Kalidas, whose "Sakuntala" was deemed by Goethe to be the finest depiction of the noblest of human emotions. Though there were several translations of it in German, in poetry and prose, there was only one in English—in which the versified portion was not poetry. But for his own recreation Barath had translated the Sanskrit text into plain prose in English in small batches, and had read them to Thompson. He was now surprised and delighted to find that at odd intervals of inspiration his friend had rendered them into poetry.

Barath saw visions. An accurate yet truly poetic translation of "Sakuntala" into English was worth the whole British army in India. This work contained the essence of domestic ideals in India, and was cherished alike by prince and peasant: was known by heart by the man in the street, and in the hamlet was recited by the village bard to the toilers in the field.

“Francis, complete this work I beg of you,” Barath cried in dawning hope. “Let the British public read it, and thus understand our most cherished ideals. That will serve to remove a mountain of misconception between Great Britain and India. Too long has the political journalist fostered this misunderstanding to gain his own sordid ends; too long has the London leader-writer hurt the deepest of Indian feelings in sheer ignorance every time he rushed into print—and too long has the Indian vernacular journalist retaliated by vilifying all things English. A plague on these political journalists! Too well and sadly have you and I seen the recent campaign of calumny between London and Paris over the Fashoda incident and the Dreyfus case—but even such a mountain of rage may be removed in a few years by a little tact, a little diplomacy, a little self-restraint. Then why not the mount of misconception between London and Calcutta? Do your share of the noble work, I implore you.”

“My voice is the voice of one in the wilderness,” Thompson answered.

“On the contrary, you alone have power to make it the voice of a prophet. See the writer who first began this campaign of falsehood between Great Britain and India—see the power he has in the land, deluding his countrymen. Then let a true poet, a true prophet, undo the evil. Do you doubt the power of a true poet even in this generation? Then listen! It goes against my heart to say anything adversely of England or of Europe, but see how all Europe has gone mad over Omar Khayyám; regardless of Ferdousi, Hafiz, or Sadi, it has fastened on this second-rate Persian poet. Then will you be a new Fitzgerald to Kalidas, truly one of the

greatest poets of India? Will you immortalise his "Sakuntala" in English poetry? Remember that thereby you will remove from England a grave reproach. It is in human nature not to appreciate a thing at its true value till it is lost. The French read even third-rate Indian literature, remembering that they lost the opportunity of possessing India through Dupleix; and the Germans do likewise because they never even had that opportunity. England alone neglects Indian literature. That is not my reproach, but the reproach of the future historian. We read and appreciate your history and literature: then why don't you read ours? Perhaps you will—when you have lost India. Remember our dear friend's last words to me. Yes, the hour of England's peril in India is at hand." Barath broke off suddenly, his eyes gazing into space, his hands clasped tight before him, his face long-drawn in mental pain. His eyes glistened, then a thin film formed before them. Yes, he too saw the picture of Wingate's dying vision.

Thompson spoke not a word. The silence was unbroken, each wrapt in his own thoughts. Presently Thompson arose from his seat, and began to walk up and down the room, slowly. After awhile his lips moved, but no sound came. Thrice he made to speak, and thrice no sound was heard. His face too was drawn with pain, physical pain, though for the moment it was quenched in some rising emotion. His lips twitched, his hand trembled as he picked up a notebook. Thus he walked awhile amid the silence. Then the emotion in his heart surged up to his lips.

"Speak, Barath, speak!" he muttered.

Awaking from his dream, Barath spoke; softly,

slowly, distinctly. He continued the narrative of the "Sakuntala" from his English prose version, which he knew by heart; but he wrote it again as he spoke.

The midnight hour passed, unheeded. The clock of a neighbouring church struck the successive hours, unheeded. The light in the room began to grow pale as the first streak of twilight crept in at the window, unheeded. The two minds worked like one. Thompson wrote in flashes of inspiration—noting just the bare poetic idea, to develop it later; but if Barath saw from the hesitating pencil that the inspiration had failed, he repeated the passage slowly once or twice, then continued, marking the gap in his own copy. Thompson had been wrought up to a kind of poetic frenzy, otherwise the flow of thought might have ceased in an hour; and behind his own emotions there was the master-mind of Kalidas suggesting a dozen conceptions and world-truths. Thus one poet was spurred on by another, and though he felt the strain too great for his fragile body, Thompson refused to yield up the task, the labour of love and of duty. In some sense Barath's impassioned appeal and the memory of Wingate's dying words helped to urge him on beyond the limit of human endurance—beyond that point at which poetic work has to be paid for in flesh and blood, and any continuance of it consumes the body in the poetic flame.

His task not yet ended, Thompson's laboured breath and trembling hand heralded the last struggle of his body against the mental goad. His ascetic face was now haggard and twitching with pain. The pencil and the book at last dropped from his hand, and with an inarticulate cry he tottered to the chimney-piece;

his fingers closed over a little phial and raised it to his lips.

"Good-night—good-bye," he faintly murmured, holding out a trembling hand. Barath took it gently.

"Good-bye, Francis," he said. "My mission may call me to Indraprastha, or Buddh-Gaya, or Port-Royal, but the memory of your friendship will remain with me and inspire me. Good-bye, peace be with you."

Francis sank upon his bed. Barath picked up the fallen book, laid it on the table, and his own notes beside it—hoping that some day Francis would complete the task. Then he returned to his room. Thus the two friends parted.

But laying his head on his pillow, a great indignation rose up in Barath's heart. The sight of that little phial still haunted him. He remembered Thompson's words of bitterness when exploring the streets of London: "And then the world will wonder how he took to drugs." In that moment the poet had spoken of himself. Barath now realised that. Alone among all Thompson's critics and acquaintances he understood how and why he took to drugs. . . .

The two friends never met again. A few years after, as I write this chronicle, the body of Francis Thompson, the greatest English poet of two generations, lies cold in death in a charity hospital, his scheme of work not completed. He had anticipated that, saying to Barath, "My Parsifal will never meet my Tristan." Yes, even Wagner, with all his advantages, had to modify his original scheme—and poor Francis Thompson never even wrote his Parsifal, dying too soon.

He also anticipated the world's judgment of him. Whilst yet his body lies cold and unburied, a prominent

critic avers of him : " He might have equalled Wordsworth, or Shelley, or Keats, but for his evil practices." So here is a picture of debauchery, which destroyed Thompson's genius. An ignorant falsehood. Another critic speaks of his " unconquerable craving for drugs and stimulants." A half-truth false~~r~~ than a total falsehood.

This is the only truth : The years of exposure in the streets of London had shattered his constitution, and had left him a physical wreck. His body was racked in pain. Not that he feared pain : he knew more of the doctrine of pain than most European poets and thinkers—nay, his insight was Eastern. But he had to sustain his life somehow, not for the sake of living, but just to fulfil his mission. Wherefore he would live long enough to deliver his message, and then die. But to sustain life the drug or the stimulant was as essential to his enfeebled body as food or air. So he took it when needed—just to quench the pain a moment, just to prolong the life an hour, till his work was done, his mission fulfilled. Thus he died. " I was born in my mother's pain, and shall die in my own." The words of Francis Thompson were fulfilled unto the last.

My brother, you have left it to an Eastern to do full honour to the memory of this great Englishman. If ever again you see a stone cast against the memory of Francis Thompson, shield him with this testimony of the Eastern who dwelt with him in heaven and in hell. I mean Barath, yea, Barath.

There remains for me to chronicle Barath's closing days in England. He returned to Cambridge, passed

his final examination with the high honours expected of him, and came down to Boscombe to take leave of Ellen. After bidding England farewell, he would have two years of arduous labour before him in the rest of the Western world. He would devote a special attention to France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Spain; he would then visit North America, seeing something of Canada, the United States, and Mexico, and sail for India from San Francisco *via* Japan. This voyage round the world would not be one of pleasure, but of constant study.

He spent a full week at Boscombe with Ellen. Though his mental attitude after Wingate's death was that of manhood, never again of childhood, his regard for Ellen was filial and constantly childlike, as if she had been his own earthly mother. Yet added to it there was now a deeper note, begotten by the completeness of his perception in the fullest manhood. His filial love for Ellen had been keen enough in response to her own sweetness and tenderness: he had regarded her mainly as clothed in the sweetness and the tenderness. Now he realised the element of tragedy and of sorrow that had all along permeated her life. In that thought his filial love rose to a sense of reverence one may feel for a martyr—and yet mingled with it there was also a sense of compassion as for a woman that has loved and lost. For in that week before the parting Ellen told him the history of her past life. In that again she was his true mother: for she had a vague perception that some day its lesson would perchance be useful to him, would comfort him and illumine his own path in life.

At the moment of parting Barath felt that he had a

message to deliver, primarily to Ellen, but through her in some manner to England also.

“ All that you have done for me I cannot yet realise. Perhaps some day I shall, if some supreme moment ever arises when the memory of these last few years urges my heart and mind to some deed affecting my destiny. Would you continue your mission ? You have friends and relatives in England dear to you ; but some day you may like to visit India, perhaps in the company of some of them. Then come to me and be my mother again. A place will be awaiting you always and at all times. Come to me then, mother mine ; come to your son again. Unless you find peace and rest in England, promise me you will come to your son in India.”

“ Unless I find peace and rest in England, I promise I will come to my son in India,” Ellen answered, some vague emotion prompting her to echo his words.

She placed a little packet in his hand, telling him to open it only when he had quitted England. Barath inwardly felt that he now stood at the parting of the ways as he had done when leaving India, in exactly the same degree, though in the opposite direction. That this was no ordinary leave-taking which could be re-done or undone again. Rather a cleavage in his path in life whose karma would be eternal. And in the karma, he instinctively felt, the little packet in his hand would be some guiding lodestone, some supreme talisman.

“ I have launched my bark upon the bosom of the deep, come what may,” the words rose up to his lips, awaking to life from some prolonged slumber in his heart. “ Farewell, farewell, farewell ! ”

Ellen kissed him. “ Good-bye, Dilkhusa ! ”

Hearing as the last word from her lips the name given

him by his own earthly mother, Barath passed from Ellen's sight.

When the steamer had left Dover for Calais, he opened the packet she had given him. He almost knew what it contained—something in his heart told him.

"Nora!" The name, so long suppressed, now escaped his lips.

Yes, it was a small miniature of Nora, in her presentation dress; her name written in diamonds beneath. There was a brief note wrapped round the portrait with a blue ribbon. It was in Ellen's handwriting, explaining that Nora had been living in Ireland with her grandmother since leaving school. She had been presented in Dublin, not in London—hence implicitly answering what Ellen knew to be a silent inquiry in Barath's heart: why he never met Nora again. The note ended by saying that the portrait was a souvenir from Ellen and Nora jointly.

Barath gazed long at the picture. Yes, it was beautiful. Nora was, and also the portrait itself. His heart stirred; almost unconsciously because any pronounced emotion in contemplating the picture would have to be stifled. He had now come to the stage of absolute detachment from all thoughts of self, to that supreme stage when fortune or misfortune is equally of no moment, and when he could receive sentence of immediate death or hear his proclamation to the throne of an empire, with equal calmness, almost equal happiness. That was perhaps the fittest frame of mind in which to receive Nora's portrait, just because the gift might have in the scheme of fate a significance of any possible range equivalent to that between death and

enthronement. Barath would accept either that came through the instrumentality of the portrait. This sense of detachment had no doubt reached its completion through recent events : Wingate's death, then Barath's parting from Thompson, and now from Ellen. He might as well part from all earthly ties—if so ordained. Ellen knew that such would be his mental frame, and thus timed his contemplation of Nora's portrait for the fittest moment—just when he would be prepared to accept with equal peace whatsoever power the hand of Nora might yet have upon the thread of his life. So, even to her last gift, Ellen remained a true mother.

Barath knew not for the moment where to keep the miniature. The sandal-wood box containing the other two mementoes, the garland and the photograph, was packed up with his luggage. So he tied the blue ribbon to the ring at the top of the miniature, bared his breast, and placed the ribbon around his neck. The portrait was so small that a man might wear it next his heart for hours, then days, months, and years, and not feel the weight of it. In time, in the stress of arduous work, he might even forget it—feeling it only at some supreme moment when his heart throbbed against it. Some supreme crisis of his life.

Barath returned to the deck of the steamer, and gazed at the white cliffs of England now fast receding from sight.

“Farewell !” he murmured, as if the white cliffs could hear. “No, not farewell. I shall come again !”

Yet a moment after he was not sure if he could come again. A mist was creeping in between, and cutting off from view the English shore. “Good-bye, England.

If I come no more, I shall still have you with me.
Peace be with you ! ”

Yes, he would still have with him a part of England. Among his luggage there was a little wooden box about the size of a cigar-box. It was filled with English soil, dug from Ellen's garden at Boscombe. Barath was taking it to India as a memento of the country he had visited and had found to be a second home.

BOOK THE THIRD

THE DESTINY

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MADNESS OF KAMONA

IN the years of Barath's absence from India many things had happened, one of which must be mentioned in the interest of this narrative.

The last we saw of Kamona was on the eve of her marriage to the wealthy thakur. Madhava was spared the agony of witnessing the day when she was given to her elderly suitor ; for the youth was sent to England just before that event. Let us now see what happened to her thenceforth.

As she was then only thirteen and a half, the marriage, though irrevocable, was what is popularly designated in India as the "first marriage," and in reality was somewhat of the nature of the solemn betrothal of mediæval Europe. The object of the bride's parents in having the ceremony at all was to fulfil their duty of securing an eligible husband for their daughter ; and likewise the bridegroom's purpose was to bind to him irrevocably one who, from his point of view, was equally desirable because of the great beauty she might possess in the near future. After the ceremony she would be escorted

to him, to return to her parents almost immediately : and for the next year or two—in fact till a time to be determined solely by her parents in her interest—the husband would periodically visit her and she would return the visit, under the chaperonage of her mother.

These return visits, when she was a wife, yet not a wife, were marked by some special celebration by her wealthy husband, and several guests and their retainers were feasted—so that if anything unusual happened there were many to bear testimony to it. After a year, when any visit of the bride might be the last, after which she would live permanently with her husband, something did happen. At the feast, at which there were several guests including a few young men, the elderly husband was taken ill. Things happen rather suddenly in India. A man may eat something unwholesome to-night, and his funeral obsequies may be to-morrow morning. That has happened often enough, and through natural causes.

The guests remained to bear the body of their host to the funeral pyre, but there was consternation among the elders when Kamona, his widow, did not appear. Now *suttee* was never compulsory anywhere in India, even before it was forbidden in British territory ; it was always voluntary, being essentially a willing sacrifice of her life by a loving wife to secure instant paradise¹ for her husband and herself by the same act of martyrdom : of that more in the fulness of time. Occasionally, indeed, abuses had been possible under a corrupt and omnipotent priesthood ; but in this instance the priesthood was neither corrupt nor omnipotent, relatives and

¹ Swarga, a stage towards Nirvana or complete union with the Deity.

friends having more power than they. *Suttee* was not legally abolished in Barathpur, but was not practised. As a proof of her love the widow offered herself for the sacrifice, and as a matter of course the offer was declined. Hence the consternation among the elder guests when Kamona did not even make the offer.

"It was different in my time," lamented Jaswan Singh, the oldest of the guests. "Then a wife would have followed her lord to the pyre, and, if held back, would have plunged a dagger into her heart." He was eighty years old, and remembered former days.

But the young men among the guests found excuses for Kamona.

"She is a widow before she has been a wife," argued a young *vakil* learned in the law. "Hence the obligation to love is not absolute." For on the ground of pure justice the wife's love for the husband becomes absolute only when she has received even the bare chance of her supremest reward—motherhood.

"As it is, her young life will be wasted and unused," said Prem Singh, Jaswan's grandson. "It is the right of mortals to enjoy the days of youth." Prem was a sprig of the old nobility whose fourscore ancestors ending with Jaswan had fought hard and spent their days on the battlefield: but his own occupation in these degenerate days, when not engaged in sport, was riding in the main streets of Barathpur and prancing his steed when a rich palanquin passed by, to show off his horsemanship. His sympathy was prompted by the subconscious regret that a beautiful young woman was going to be wasted in the scheme of life.

But Kamona was not quite a young woman. Her best plea against even the offer of the *suttee* was that she

was scarcely more than a child, and could not possess the mental attitude necessary for the full consent to the *suttee*, whereas upon that consent was dependent the whole efficacy of the sacrifice. Nay, she was too young even to understand what widowhood implied, or to feel the nature of the loss she had sustained. The awakening came slowly, and was only completed a few years later—when she had grown to the fullest womanhood. Meanwhile the first indication of her loss came to her when her mother took away her bridal jewels, and gave her none other instead ; when she took away the pretty robes of many colours, and gave her instead a plain white unembroidered *sari*. It may break a mother's heart to do that, but some one had to do it—and better a mother than a mother-in-law.

Then Kamona began to understand the nature of her bereavement. When she had consented fifteen months ago to obey her parents by giving up all thoughts of Madhava and marrying her elderly suitor, a husband had been a mere idea to her, and the marriage but the possession of beautiful robes and jewels. Now these very things were taken away from her. She might have thought that thereby the marriage itself was undone, and that she could resume life from the moment of her parting from Madhava. Madhava indeed was then in England, and for all she knew might have passed out of her life ; but surely she herself was the same as then, and could accept whatever material happiness came to her lot ?

Then slowly the disillusionment began. In reality there is no material happiness usually possible to a Hindu widow, but moral and spiritual : and from the age of fifteen onwards a girl's thoughts are mainly material—

and romantic. Having lost one husband, why should she not have another? And this time a young one in preference, so that he should not die so soon. Why must she wear this plain dress, and have not a single jewel? And why be deprived of all those delicacies which had never been denied her since childhood? It took some time for poor Kamona, pretty butterfly that she was, to understand that such privations were now a part of her daily life. She revolted, and refused to give up all hope.

Her insistence bore some fruit: her father took her back to the home of her childhood. She could have remained in her dead husband's house, subject to most of the privations of widowhood, but still as the widow of a great thakur. Instead her father took her back as the daughter of a sonar, incurring thereby the scorn of the thakur's relatives; for he sought to comfort his only child, and did not really care for the opinion of the world. His wife died, and he had none other to love except his child, feeling too old to marry again. He was wealthy himself, and some day Kamona would inherit his riches. Then should he see her deprived of all the material joys of life, and feel that afterwards *his entire wealth would pass to strangers*? This second was a subtle thought that just flashed through his mind, but was not developed till some months later.

Of course he cursed himself for a fool for not having accepted Madhava, for in the two years he heard of the brilliant progress the youth had made in England and the splendid prospects that awaited him in Barathpur. Was it now altogether too late? Indeed it was too late the very moment after the sonar broke off the match with Madhava; for the youth's proud father forbade

the sonar's very name to be mentioned in his presence from that moment. And yet—and yet—Madhava might be his own master some day. And besides him there were other youths, well-born but poor. . . . The marriage of a widow was unprecedented in Barathpur—but so it had been a few years ago in Calcutta and Bombay, and now was of occasional occurrence. Surely the innovation might spread ? . . .

The sonar took counsel within himself. He knew that frail man was but the creature of circumstances. So he would be the maker of circumstances. He laid his schemes far ahead.

He began by buying up the adjoining land. The gardens of his mansion were already extensive, so a little addition for alleged improvements would cause little comment. After he had acquired an acre or two on the other three sides, he turned his attention to what was his main objective—the little plot between his land and the small mansion of Madhava's father. There, together with half an acre of his original land, he built a fine garden-house. As customary, it was divided into two sections: the "public," where the owner could entertain his men friends; the "inner" (*andar mahal*) reserved for women. The whole of the former was visible from the neighbour's mansion opposite; the latter could be partly seen from the rear of the small garden belonging to the mansion. But its proud owner, scorning this ostentation and indifferent to its purpose, shut up the windows of that side of his house, so as never to see the magnificence of the vulgar sonar. In that, of course, he was somewhat unjust; for even a sonar could hardly introduce such a crime into India as vulgarity. He might go very near it, however, if he thought that

thereby he could create the circumstances necessary for his daughter's happiness.

The sonar announced that the outer portion of the garden-house was open to his friends, and the friends of his friends, and their friends. That was a subtle way of suggesting that it was open to all of high caste ; for a sonar's friend might be a minor official, and the latter's friend a courtier of some standing, and so on upwards. The farthest pawn is within five moves of the king—and in every country the village blacksmith knows somebody, who knows somebody else, who in two more steps is an intimate friend of the king. So it happened that in a short time the nobility and gentry of Barathpur understood that if they went for sport in the direction of the jungle stocked with the finest big-game in the State, there was a rest-house on the way to and from the hunting where they could have a lavish hospitality without the asking. Big-game hunting is the usual occupation of the leisured upper classes in India ; hence hunters from various parts of the State came to this well-favoured jungle, and whereas formerly they had to bring a large number of followers with tents and other paraphernalia for their creature comforts, and therefore could not come so often, they now had the sonar's well-appointed garden-house for their use at all times.

Their host judiciously remained unseen, but took care that the guests were handsomely entertained and that the laws of caste were well preserved. The guests understood that the sonar was seeking " to obtain merit " by his hospitality, and had no concern with him personally. However, in course of time they came to hear of his affairs ; that his only child was a daughter, now a lovely youngwoman of sixteen ; that she had been married to an

old thakur, but it was only the "first marriage" that had been celebrated, and that the thakur had died before the marriage proper, or "second marriage"; that the sonar was wealthy, and besides his daughter had no near relations. Some of the guests occasionally caught a glimpse of her in the garden; for though she usually lived in her father's mansion, she sometimes crossed over to the "inner" side of the garden-house, being the mistress of both since her mother's death. As customary she now wore at all times a plain white unembroidered *sari*; but a beautiful figure is adorned the best in a clinging soft *sari*, not in layers of cloth-of-gold. The few men that saw her, even if for a moment and from a distance, understood that what they had heard about her great beauty was undoubtedly true; but as she was a widow their interest was purely objective.

Nevertheless it so happened that several young men of the upper classes, whose former attachment to manly sport had been somewhat fitful, now took to big-game hunting strenuously: thus they came to the garden-house, and often.

What was their ultimate motive? Undoubtedly they enjoyed the hunting, but if they had analysed their minds truthfully they would have found some attraction for the garden-house, apart from the hunting: in fact that they came in the hope of catching a glimpse of Kamona. But what then? If they had been pointedly asked whether any of them intended to marry the widow, they would have repudiated the suggestion instantly. Then what other motive could there be? There could be none, which they would have discovered if they had indeed analysed their minds. But they had not done so; young men seldom examine their own

motives. That was just why they did come to the sonar's garden-house. They found it pleasant in every way—more so if they had the æsthetic enjoyment as well of catching a glimpse of a beautiful object—and did not pause to search their hearts and analyse their thoughts.

The poor sonar was flattered by their coming at all. In his inmost heart there was a dawning hope. Some day surely one of these young men of high caste would seek to make his personal acquaintance? That would be the first step—and it was so very simple! He was always ready; in fact, awaiting the call. Surely there was nothing irrevocable in seeking to meet one's host? And if the young man did not care to call openly at the mansion, he was prepared to meet him quietly—and quite casually—in the garden adjoining the rest-house where the youth was staying at that very time.

And yet not one of these young men took that step which seemed so simple to the sonar. In reality, to them, it would almost have been equivalent to an offer of marriage. So they hesitated; so they ate and drank and slept in the garden-house, and went away—but came back again; and yet again. In that lay the unhappy sonar's only hope: these young men wanted time to get used to the idea of marriage with a widow. They came back again: that was some comfort.

When Kamona was seventeen her father happening to go to town one day, returned post-haste.

"Hope on, my child. I have tidings of joy!"

"Then he has returned," Kamona answered, understanding her father's words instinctively.

"This very day," the sonar added. "He is now in the palace to report himself; this evening he will be here to see his father. Deck thyself in thy best, and

come to the garden-house. Surely he will walk in his own garden this evening, and after the years of absence visit every nook in the home of his childhood."

But Madhava, returning home, visited every nook on its other sides : alone the sonar's side was ignored. Not a window was opened.

Kamona was in tears. The sonar soothed her, saying :—

"He is still under his father's influence. Besides, the old man is ailing, and none must thwart him. Have patience."

But though Madhava's father died, the windows on that side remained unopened. There was no injunction ; Madhava simply continued his father's practice.

Sick at heart, the sonar at last gave up the hopeless struggle against an adverse fate. He retired to his mansion, but allowed the open hospitality of the garden-house to continue. He had to spend the money somehow, as there would be none of his house to inherit it.

Then Kamona took the law into her own hands. She was now eighteen, and felt her chances of marriage slipping by—and when a woman feels like that she feels desperate. In India a beautiful woman is usually at her best between sixteen and twenty-six, which is about seven years earlier than the period in Europe : though indeed among the higher castes in India there are a few women who seem to have discovered the secret of perpetual youth ; the beautiful mother of two boys of fifteen and sixteen, standing unveiled beside them, has been taken to be their elder sister of seventeen.

But Kamona was a widow. In modern India and among the higher caste women eighteen is not a hopeless age for marriage, nor twenty-five. But the case of a

widow is totally different. Usually her chance of remarriage is infinitesimal from the beginning, and reaches absolute zero after eighteen or twenty. Hence Kamona's fear.

So far, together with the fear, there was one little hope in her heart. Some day Madhava might relent, or even accidentally see her. After all he had once loved her truly—and now she was more beautiful than then. Oh, if she could only reawaken that love, or even have the bare chance of doing so! O Lakmé, O Parvathi, grant her that bare chance! She watched him daily from behind the lattice as he rode out in the morning to his duties in the palace five miles away, and again on his return in the evening. Would that he would but look her way, just once! She had rehearsed all that she would do in that moment—the pose, the gaze, and the revelation of love, yearning, despair. Not exactly by violating the laws of propriety, which bade her remain unseen by strangers, but by stretching the laws a little in Madhava's favour—so that he would again see her as he had done when she was about to become his wife, and thus perchance awaken in his heart the emotion of that bygone moment, and make him see her again as his wife-to-be.

In vain. Nearly two years passed, and Kamona was now almost twenty: but Madhava simply ignored her existence. Place a demigod beside a lump of clay, and a woman will choose the lump of clay—so thinks every man crossed in love. So thought Madhava when he parted from Kamona, and ever since. And meanwhile, feeding her own heart by the constant sight of him, whilst herself unseen, her love had grown greater than she could bear. Then realising his indifference,

she at last revolted at fate, and actively. More than that : the world had treated her unjustly, for her father's schemes on her behalf had aroused sneers and jests : she would be avenged on the world by violating its injunctions. She began by giving up the privations of widowhood. She resumed the former luxuries—and gradually added to them. She had ample means ; so she would see that they ended with her. Yes, she would shock the world—and take pleasure in doing it.

She ordered the entertainments to be given on a more lavish scale, with music and dancing-girls. This was a revolution. The guests opened their eyes, and men of the type of Prem Singh made jests. Kamona herself was occasionally visible—from the adjoining balcony or the garden below, with the aid of the proper manœuvres. She now held these guests in scorn ; so she would tempt them with her beauty. They would realise what they had missed. That would be their hell.

She thus worked herself up to a state of frenzy in which she would dare anything. . . .

One day Madhava encountered Prem Singh in the palace. There was very little in common between the two men. Madhava was a strenuous worker as a junior assistant in the dewan's office ; Prem was a gallant who spent his days in idle dalliance, and always knew the latest gossip. He occasionally came to the palace to have a chat with his cousin Harnam Singh, the Captain of the Palace Guards, himself a gallant in weaker moments, but imbued with extravagant ideals of chivalry in returning manhood. Prem was mentioning Kamona to Harnam in lurid terms.

“ What canst thou expect from a sonar's daughter ! ”

he laughed. Then lowering his voice, he added, "I wager my best polo pony against thine that within the dark moon I shall be—beneath—her—window."

"Hush!" Harnam whispered. He had begun by laughing at the jest; then he sobered instantly. Not two yards away Madhava was passing. He had stopped, his lips compressed.

"Let me hear that again," he said beneath his breath to Prem, "and I shall run thee through!"

Prem's hand flew to his sword.

"Put back thy hand," Madhava continued. "The sword looks better at thy side than in thy hand."

Harnam intervened and quieted his cousin.

"What has the sonar's daughter to do with thee or thine?" Prem asked Madhava tauntingly.

"Nothing. But were she the daughter of a *gharami* (wood-chopper) Harnam and I would defend her against the calumny of a braggart!" Saying this, Madhava walked away.

Brave words! By coupling Harnam's name with his own he vaguely sought to strengthen his own statement that Prem's words were indeed a calumny and could have no foundation in fact. In reality in his own inmost heart a dim fear was begotten that there might be some foundation.

The thought grew. By the midnight hour the fear was no longer dim, but tangible. Looking out of the verandah he saw the slanting rays of the late moon. Had he chosen to walk round the corner, he would have seen the moon rising behind the *andar mahal* of the garden-house; and choosing to walk down the few steps on that side to the foot of the mango-tree, he could stand unseen under its shelter and look into

Kamona's open window. But he did not so choose. Instead he returned to his pillow, though not to sleep.

Meanwhile Kamona's dare-devil mood had wrought a change in her character, rather had completed the development begun when her father had retired vanquished and she had commenced to fight her own battle. In childhood we saw her as a pretty butterfly seeking admiration. Had fate been kind, she would have remained at that ; but her adversity had brought out traits that were dormant. First the consciousness of self-interest in being compelled to fight her own battle. Self-interest is not necessarily selfishness, but may be manifested in the same manner as selfishness and be mistaken for it, when the struggle is keen. Then there was Kamona's resentment against her lot. She knew that she was beautiful ; her mirror had told her that a thousand times ; nay, her beauty was of that order that had wrecked kingdoms in the past history of her country. Yet she was unhappy : whereas she had known a dozen plain girls in the neighbourhood, who were now happy wives and happy mothers. She had been denied the bare chance of being in very deed a wife, whereas most girls in her country were not so denied. When widowhood came to her she was too young to know what it implied ; and being too young also to be in love with her husband she had not missed the denial of true wifeness. But now, feeding her own heart with love, and consumed with it all the more fiercely because of the very stealth with which she daily watched Madhava, she realised fully what she had missed in missing wifeness.

In that thought was subtly begotten a vague craving for satisfaction ; something whispered to her that the

instinct for wifehood should not altogether be denied satisfaction. Perhaps she was mad—but let the craving for wifehood be satisfied for one brief hour, and then she would drink the cup of oblivion and fling herself upon a pyre. . . .

In such a mood she stood before her mirror one night. The mirror was of beaten silver made by her father's artisans ; it was composed of several pieces so skilfully put together as to cast an unbroken image, and was long enough to take in her whole body. As the night was warm she had her window opened wide ; her privacy was still preserved, since the corresponding windows in Madhava's house remained closed as in the years past. She stood in front of the mirror, but tilted it a little to the side so that she could see her image in it and at the same time see her profile silhouetted by the light behind against the wall opposite. In that position she had the further advantage of being well to one side of the open window, while also securing a darker background for her image in the mirror ; for looking in it, she dimly saw behind her image the dark outline of the mango-tree in Madhava's garden.

In that mood, in that craving for satisfaction, everything seemed to conspire together to intensify the physical side of her nature. Out of the stillness the voices of the night spoke to her. From the distant forest there floated to her ear the soft cries of a pair of *nilgais*. From a neighbouring champak grove some golden-throated bulbul sang to her mate a song of love ; and the wandering mate, hearing the song from the hillside, flew to her nest, singing of requited love. All earth seemed to Kamona to sing a nuptial song. From behind the hill two streamlets came hastening down,

and united below ; the faint echo of the mingling waters, long-drawn to sweetness and rippling melody, trickled to her ear. To Kamona the mingling of the waters was the emblem of an eternal nuptial. The garden below the Garden of Kama, dedicated to the rites of Love.

Her fancy ran riot. She exulted in the possession of charms accorded to few women : in fancy she sought to use them—to enslave the world. In fancy she re-enacted the scenes of Oriental love-tales, scenes that grew more passionate, more voluptuous, at every pose. Thus she was intoxicated with her own beauty. Her contemplation of her charms was not like the critical and artistic admiration of a Marie Bashkertseiff, but was of the nature of a self-love in which for the want of a human lover she had to play both parts, her own and the lover's.

The grace of her movements, the liveness of her body, the suppleness of her limbs, she saw in the mirror. Then with a wild abandonment she unloosened the bodice of her *sari*. The drapery came down, and she put up her hands to feel the touch of her skin—silk and velvet like the rose-petal. A frenzy of self-glorification surged over her as her eyes wandered down. The colour of her body, unvisited by the sun, was that of a new-born babe—cream and gold combined, with just a touch of the deep red rose. Her exultant eye noted the poise of the neck made perfect by the silver pitcher carried on the head in growing girlhood ; noted the gentle swell below of her heaving bosom. Her slender hands fondly caressed her neck, her shoulders, soothed her panting bosom.

When the human body burns with an unquenchable flame, it must move, and move rapidly, to find the only

relief possible. Kamona flung off her dress, and began the serpent dance, viewing in the mirror the voluptuous sway of her bared limbs, and their perfect outline silhouetted against the wall. There was no accompaniment, save the sighing breeze and the stirring of the mango-leaves in the adjoining garden. But no accompaniment was needed save her tumultuous passion. Her movements grew bolder as the fire of passion burned deeper in her veins. She passed to the dance of Radha, and depicted that beautiful maiden awaiting her lover in mingled love, jealousy, despair—then on his coming, abandoning herself to him completely. In changing mood she took up the dance of Uma, the wife of the great god Shiva, the Dread Destroyer. The king of the demons is assaulting *Swarga* (Hindu Olympus) with his infernal legions, and to allay the fears of the lesser gods Uma appears before the demon king as a beautiful woman and tempts him, revealing her loveliness yet evading his grasp, till maddened with futile desire he seeks to possess her by violence, when, endowed with Shiva's puissance by marital rites, she destroys in wrath the demon king and all his legions—then relapses to the amorous mood and sinks into her husband's arms. Depicting the last scene when the fire in her veins had consumed her strength, Kamona sank on her bed in a swoon. . . .

And from beneath the mango-tree Madhava fled.

For the rampart of pride had been broken down by Prem Singh's vaunting words. Vague apprehension mingled with unconscious jealousy had at last drawn him to the garden—he could not tell why. Perhaps in part to allay the apprehension and assure himself that it was causeless ; perhaps also to remove the cause of

the apprehension, if really existent, by thwarting Prem's purpose. Then coming to the mango-tree he had seen Kamona's reflection in the mirror as she first stood before it. Though noting at a glance the completed beauty of her face after these six years, his attitude had been initially one of absolute indifference, even of scorn, as if he was there solely from a sense of duty. Then looking again, though still in indifference, he could not help seeing the sadness and the despair. That softened him a little; for it revealed to him how much she had suffered in these six years. A while later, when hearing the cries of the *nilgais* and the song of the bulbuls, and yearning for wifehood, she re-enacted the Oriental love-tales, he realised that she had grown to love him passionately—for he knew the themes of the tales as a European might know the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. In that he had felt some pity for Kamona, especially as he was sure that her love would remain unrequited, that he himself would never relent.

And then, and then—afterwards, when in the frenzy of despair she gave way to the madness of self-love—he stood rooted to the spot, partly in fascination, partly in horror; partly also in some awakened sense that caused in him a subtle pleasure when he was not thinking of it, but for which he cursed himself when conscious. Thus biting his flesh to allay that sense, he fled from the tree.

“Little fool!” he muttered. “What will be thy end?”

But awhile after the thought came to him that though she had changed his lot in the past, and indeed forever, by once marrying, it might now be in his power to alter her fate and thereby the end he foresaw might be hers.

“ Poor Kamona ! ” he added softly. “ Thy punishment is greater than mine.”

The scene of that night made a deep impression upon him. He did not wish to remember it, but could not help doing so. He put away the recollection when conscious of it, yet caught himself dwelling on it when his mind was not otherwise occupied, especially after the day's work. Even at work his mind would occasionally fly off at a tangent and resume that recollection. Without seeking to be analytical he was trying to understand the various stages and their causes by which Kamona had wrought herself up to the state of frenzy he had witnessed. Perhaps that was merely due to a temporary, even momentary, aberration ; for the sanest man might have a moment of madness once in his lifetime, for which afterwards he himself could assign no explanation save a transitory loss of his reason under a long-continued nervous strain. Madhava thought it might be so with Kamona.

Then reviewing her actions of the past two years, of which he was silently cognisant, he understood how that nervous strain had increased beyond endurance. He could not, indeed, help feeling some scorn for her father in the first instance, and for her subsequently, for the lavish entertainments in the garden-house, especially for the daring innovations she had sanctioned. Yet even in that he tried to understand her frame of mind, and attributed those acts also to a mental aberration under the bitterness of failure. Thus, unconsciously, his thoughts always ended in finding excuses for her.

Which shows the frailty of man. He thought he was

trying to be just. In reality he had never ceased to love her, though in pride he had crushed his heart. Seeing her again after these years, and realising that the promise of these years was indeed fulfilled, his mind went back to the past, and thereby the smothered flame in his heart was awakened to life. His excuses for her were but the signs that the awakened flame was now burning anew, perhaps unconsciously fed by the assurance that the promise of years was more than fulfilled. The completeness of that assurance which she unwittingly accorded him in her acts of madness might have startled him at that time—and had she accorded it intentionally it might have aroused his scorn; moreover his own participation as a spectator in the final scene, even though he had not anticipated its happening, might have aroused some sense of guiltiness on his own side: nevertheless that assurance, that knowledge of Kamona's perfection in womanhood, lingered at the back of his memory involuntarily. Indeed that knowledge occasionally aroused in him a resentment against fate, against Kamona's father, and against Kamona herself, for having deprived him of the privilege of becoming her husband, and by a sort of obstinacy in adversity the resentment made him vow anew that he would not be her husband now: nevertheless the privation, past and present, served to bring out the physical element in his awakened love for Kamona, though he was not aware of the love itself, and merely felt the physical element as an indefinable craving to see her, to be near her—at least as near as was then possible. For at the slightest conscious perception of the desire for her close proximity his pride arose in strength: he thought of the crowd of

men at the front of the garden-house, and his scorn arose for them and for Kamona.

Then suddenly he heard with astonishment that the garden-house was closed to the public—from the very day following the scene he had witnessed. Was it a sign of returning sanity? If so, his scorn was removed; the check to the unconscious craving for a close proximity was removed. Moreover, with returning sanity her own ardour must have cooled; wherefore there could be no peril in the close proximity. All of which was an unconscious sophistry to justify his own intangible craving.

For Kamona had not suddenly altered. The dance of frenzied love was over, but the yearning for satisfaction remained. The dance had been the outward expression of the yearning when it had risen to a maximum; now she merely denied herself the expression. She dismissed her ungrateful guests partly because she was weary of them, and partly because in the great tension of her nerves their presence was now an irritation. She wanted rest.

Meanwhile Madhava's thoughts grew more recurrent, his feelings more insistent. He was no saint; at first, whenever aware of his thoughts, he had dismissed them peremptorily; but with frequent recurrence and consequent familiarity their dismissal was more tardy: nay, sometimes there was a sense of pleasure in letting his mind dwell on them a moment before the dismissal. After all Kamona might have been his wife; hence with unconscious sophistry he clothed his thoughts with the garb of hypothetical matrimony—which seemed to give a sanction to the thoughts by implying matrimony as the condition precedent to the satisfaction of the desires implied in the thoughts. That even now he did

not intend marrying Kamona seemed to be no bar to the thoughts ; for the sophistry was so complete that he assumed the hypothetical marriage to be an accomplished fact prior to the thoughts, nay, accomplished in the years past when it should have been so.

In that frame of mind he might have remained for months, even years, allowing his thoughts, emotions, desires to work inwardly, but without any outward expression in deed. Then suddenly, within a month, there fell upon him a thunderbolt from the blue—so it seemed to him in his state of mind. He was commanded to proceed to Europe at the head of the Barathpur Commission, which has already been chronicled ; and he was allowed only a few weeks for preparation. In reality this Commission had been projected for nearly a year, and Madhava had known for several months that his services might be needed : yet the actual command came to him in the nature of a shock and in some way as the severance of a tie.

Which shows that within the month his thoughts and cravings had grown to be almost an obsession.

An obsession demands action—either to break it or to satisfy it. Madhava was aroused to action ; instinctively, yet subconsciously. His feet just carried him to his garden. He stood beneath the mango-tree in vague purpose, waited awhile, saw nothing of Kamona, and returned—in mingled relief and disappointment ; in disappointment at not seeing her, in relief because he really did not know what he could have done had he seen her. He aimlessly came the next night and the next. The moon was now in the third quarter, and the nights were growing darker.

There was only a hedge between the two grounds,

and as Madhava's father had scorned for years to give any attention to that side of his garden, the hedge was now in decay and was a nominal landmark ; in parts it was quite removed by some of the former guests in the garden-house, either in a frolicsome mood or in an æsthetic revolt at its dilapidated condition. As if justified by this trespass which had removed the landmark at that portion, Madhava's feet just carried him over it on the moon's seventh dark night.

The silent guest-house stood before him, the open verandah inviting him. He resisted the call, and passed beside it. On the other side there was a fountain, the water constantly spouting up and falling back to the marble basin ; from there the superfluous water was drawn off by a channel to feed an artificial pool. Madhava dipped his hands in the pool ; the water was cool and refreshing. At the basin there was a drinking cup ; and Madhava filled it and drank.

"I have tasted her hospitality," he said, smiling bitterly. "It is consummated."

In the garden he strolled aimlessly, but not far. From a seat he contemplated the house. It was wrapt in gloom.

"Poor Kamona," he voiced his thoughts, "it is as it should be. This must be our final parting ; for anything may happen in the year of my absence."

He did not wish to see her because he had nothing to say, nothing to offer : yet there would be pleasure in seeing her. Then there was still some residual scorn for her in his heart, but now also a sense of pity. He would curse her beneath his breath for having ever given him up—and then feel a subtle joy even in thinking of what might have been. In that his senses tingled

—till he quenched the pleasure in pain. He put his hand to his knee, and his lips twitched in pain—as if the touch had hurt him.

Thus he communed with his thoughts till unintentionally he fell asleep. His last conscious purpose had been to arise and depart to his house even as he had come—with just that silent visit and that drink of water at the fountain as his last farewell to Kamona. But delaying to arise, he fell asleep.

He dreamed. The days of his love passed before him in flashes ; in scenes that rapidly glided, one into the next, at haphazard but without intermission. He was eighteen, Kamona thirteen. As practically betrothed, he had lavished his love upon her and had claimed love's first privilege—the memory of that first kiss was awakened to life in the dream. She was a child, but would be a woman soon, and to him the loveliest of women. In the years past he had enacted in fancy all the deeds of love he would perform in very truth when actually married : in the dream he enacted them anew. The tender care, the cherishment, the abnegation—and likewise the joy, the bliss, the reward, and her answering love in return for his own. He felt her hot kisses upon his lips, her arms around his neck, when in turn she was the lover, he the loved one.

“Awake, my love ! At last I have thee !”

Was this in dream, or in very truth ? The intoxication of joy was upon him, and he thrilled with the embrace, the kisses. It must be a dream ; hence to stir, to open his eyes, would dispel it.

“These two years mine eyes have beheld thee daily, and the fire in my heart has consumed my body. Feel how I burn.” She took his hand and held it to her

breast beneath the muslin ; it touched the silken skin, felt the hot panting bosom.

“Awake, my love ! Answer thy wedded wife ! This is our bridal : I have long awaited it. Awake !” She clutched the hand and pressed it beneath the left breast, so that its full weight imprisoned it. “Feel how my heart beats for thee ! Awake—answer its love !”

His hand tingled in every fibre. His eyes opened involuntarily. In the pale dim light of the crescent moon, now arisen, he saw Kamona bending over him. He raised his head, but sat still.

“Woman, what wouldst thou have me do ?”

“Whatever thy heart prompts thee.”

“I have no heart.”

She feared he might slip through her hands. “Then whatever thy wishes prompt thee.”

“I have no wishes regarding thee.”

“Art so cold, while I am on fire ?” She bent over him, clutching both his hands to her bosom—so that the fold of the single garment parted, revealing in the dim light a vague suggestion of the fulness of her beauty.

“Why hesitate—whilst I grow frantic ? Wouldst have me voice my passion ? Then have it ! See, I glory in my shame ! These two years I have loved thee, yearned for thee, pined for thee ! Wouldst have me in frenzy and consumed with shame ?”

Her voice broke. She stood still, her limbs quivering. The frenzy that she avowed was no frenzy ; it was but a piteous cry of despair that now escaped her lips. “I was first promised thee as thy wife. Then take me, take me, take me as thy wife—take my all !” In that total

abandonment the voice that was piteous now exulted. "Yes, my bridegroom, take my all!"

"Woman, wouldst tempt me?" He roused himself suddenly. "Am I of stone? How can I take thee—without the bridal?"

A little hope crept into her heart. He might yet yield, if she held him awhile. "Then let this be our bridal, yea, and our true marriage." Her voice was soft and pleading. "A *gorbodhan* marriage, such as demigods and heroes have. Thou art my hero, a king, meeting me, a humble maiden, in the forest. Then the plighting of our love suffices—and afterwards thou dost take me to thy throne, and a thousand priests bow down and avow that ours was a true marriage. Come, my love, hesitate no more. This is the Garden of Kama!"

Madhava started, leaping to his feet. A woman may know and remember all the eight ways of legitimate marriage, but Madhava's recollection of the *gorbodhan* or simplest form had ceased with his historical studies. It was partly in the consciousness of his safety that he had ventured into her garden; because marriage being impossible, he thought he was strong enough to resist his cravings for actual satisfaction if unsanctioned by marriage.

"Woman, cease to tempt me! Wouldst have me insult thee? Then have it—I shall never marry thee! Does that suffice?"

She laughed bitterly. "Insult? I have passed beyond that! Dost understand me? I want to have thy arms around me straining me to thy heart, and to feel thy hot panting kisses upon my burning lips. I want to have thee and possess thee, and be possessed by

thee—with or without marriage. There, see how I insult myself ! ”

“ Tempter, begone—ere I rend thee ! Shall I rend thee, or rend myself ? I burn ! I am on fire ! Go ! ”

But she stood. For now in the shame and the self-abasement there was also a glory and an exultation, and a last hope. She bent forward to throw her arms around him and hold him till he yielded. He recoiled, stumbled against the seat, sat down on it, his hand clutching the right knee, his lips twitching in instant pain.

“ Feel that ! ” he hoarsely cried.

She laid her hand on the knee, and felt something hard above it. “ A steel chain,” she said in wonder, “ circled tight upon thy flesh ! Why ? ”

“ To stifle the sting of my flesh,” he muttered.

“ Since when, my love ? ” she softly asked, her voice caressing him.

“ Since I saw thee—a month ago. In the dances.”

She went down on her knees on the soft grass. “ Let me kiss it—the chain of thy servitude ! ” She lifted up the loose fold of the dress, bared the limb, and kissed the chain and the swollen veins. He sat still and did not resist ; for his pain was great. He had grown quite calm.

And curious, very curious—she too was calm. The thought might have come to her that this self-infliction was indeed a tribute to her charms ; but if it did, it aroused no exultation. Tenderly she undid the chain, and chafed the injured limb. Then she looked up to his face.

“ So, Madhava, thou didst see me in the dances ? ” she said naively. “ Then by that alone thou art my

husband. For none but a husband should have seen me thus."

"Or instead with red-hot irons I now put out my eyes."

"Put them out afterwards or not, thou hast seen the fruit: and seeing is half tasting. So thou art half my husband."

She arose and sat down beside him. "I claim half the rights of a wife." She put her arm around his neck, kissed him on the lips lovingly, but without the fire with which she had first awakened him from sleep. He did not resist, for her claim was just.

"Come, lay thy head on my bosom," she said, drawing down the head.

Awhile after, grown bolder, she pleaded, "But thou must be active, not merely passive. It is just. I have claimed half the rights of the wife; thou must claim half the husband's. It is just. So kiss me, dearest!"

"Verily it is just," he muttered, kissing her.

"Again!" she whispered—and clutching his hands, held them to her breast. He thrilled in every fibre.

"Oh, Kamona, why didst thou remove the chain?"

She felt his panting breath, and knew that a molten fire was coursing anew through his veins. She held him tighter, and her kisses were now passionate.

"Kamona, put on the chain! I burn again!"

"No, not the chain, but the *gorbodhan*," she whispered. "Claim the other half of thy rights!"

Well might he yield—this mortal man or any other mortal man. He was no saint. Having begun with one sophistry Madhava was liable to another. *Gorbodhan* did not validate marriage with a widow; but to Madhava in that moment the invalidity seemed

to be a mere accident—simply because marriage with a widow was not practised—an accident that could be repaired. It was sufficient that the *gorbodhan* bound him in conscience.

And on Kamona's part, even in the supremest abandonment of love—avowed and expressed, aye exulted in, with Eastern candour—there was always the vague consciousness that the word of the high-born was better than his bond.

Thus she conquered. . . .

Locked in embrace, they arose. Through the enshrouding gloom vague instinct led them on. Vague instinct led them to the garden-house, holding each other. At the threshold, unfamiliar with his environments, Madhava stumbled; but Kamona sustained him.

"One step more, my love," she whispered, "and thou art in thy kingdom!"

Cæsar crossed the Rubicon with less emotion. Madhava was torn between long stifled passion, doubt of self, and the sense of his own weakness—the weakness of a mortal, of a man of flesh and blood. Before the inner chamber he made his last stand.

"Woman, wouldst tempt me to perjure my soul and deny thee before the world?"

"The world, my love? What have I to do with the world, or the world with me? I am dead to the world. Thy heart is my world. Deny me not in thy heart—and I am proclaimed thy wife in *my* world." She held him in her embrace, pressing him to her bosom.

"Kamona, a molten fire burns my vitals! I yield, I yield—but fear to yield!" His teeth were clenched

upon his lips. "I may yet perjure! What sign in lieu of witness?"

"This!" She drew him to the window. The crescent moon, vanishing past the mango-tree, sent its parting rays through the window.

Seven times they circled round the moonbeam in lieu of fire. *Gorbodhan* needed no witness, nor fire, but the union of love alone; the circling of fire was a completer form. Now the moonbeam was the sign alike of witness and of fire. Having done its work, it went past the window.

"Come black night, come abysmal darkness—the light of my heart sufficeth!" she said in joy unutterable. "At last I have won thee—won thee—won thee! My bridegroom, my husband!" . . .

Locked in each other's arms, they stood swaying, trembling, tottering, sinking.

"Come *Gandharvas*, celestial messengers, and witness our nuptial," Kamona whispered, sinking slowly in the enshrouding gloom. "Report it at the Court of Indra, chronicle it in the archives of heaven!"

CHAPTER XXV

BARATH'S HOME-COMING

BARATHPUR was the scene of great activity on the return of the Commission under Madhava after twelve months. A little later, when the report of the Commission had been duly considered, the first of the early batch of youths sent to Europe returned likewise. Only a few special men like Chandra Sena and Nishi Kashe had gone for five years, the others for one, two, or three. So it happened that while Barath was still in England, his father's State began the industrial and economic activity foreshadowed by the Commission.

Madhava, now the chief assistant to the dewan, was the leader of this new activity, ably assisted by Vindara. The relative position of the three men was complex, and unique for India. Vashista was the practical ruler of the State as he was the prime minister to Barath's father, and the instrument for carrying out the larger policies of the State; but the details of the schemes were left to Madhava; indeed in a few instances the original suggestion came from Madhava. Thus when the schemes had actually materialised, and the industrial enterprises were inaugurated, Madhava was promoted to what in a British parallel we may call the Cabinet: he was appointed the Vakil of the

Palace, that is, the chief legal adviser to the State. And as the office of Vakil of the Palace also included that of a finance minister, Madhava's main duty now was to strengthen the revenues of Barathpur, since the question of finance was the basis of every public question in an enterprising State.

But Vindara held no Cabinet office, as he was a British subject. In the preceding years a few British subjects, especially Bengalis, had held high office in the States of some of the sovereign princes; but the practice, though not vetoed, was not encouraged. So after the work of the Commission was over, Vindara was employed in Barathpur unofficially. He had no departmental status; he merely suggested things. Madhava duly considered his suggestions. After all, that was the best position Vindara could occupy. He could speak his mind, not only to Madhava and Vashista, but if necessary to the British Resident. He could play the candid friend, and be eulogistic in his approval or vitriolic in his condemnation.

Meanwhile Barath finished his education in England and started on his tour round the world. His father, though now in feeble health, permitted no information to reach his son that might cause him to abandon or shorten his tour. Even when dying seven months before Barath was due, his father sent him a last message amounting to a command to complete the tour and all else he had schemed for the future welfare of his country. With the message there also went the assurance that the affairs of the State would be well managed in his absence: the general administration of Barathpur would remain in Vashista's hands; as for the palace, which was a world within

a world, Moolraj had been appointed its Comptroller, and would by his fidelity, his devotion, his love, maintain the high honour of the House of Barath.

The people awaited the coming of their young ruler in the belief that the new reign would in some manner inaugurate a new era in the history of Barathpur. There was a vague perception of something in Barath's personality that was not altogether material.

Beyond the outer gate of the palace there was a public serai used in common by travellers passing through the town and by those who had business in the palace or awaited friends to or from the palace. It was always a motley group that gathered there of an evening, smoking their hookahs and listening to one another's tales. A week before Barath's coming the crowd was greater than usual; for the town was full, hence also all its serais. The streets were thronged, and passers-by stopped a moment at the serai before the palace gate, to catch the ending of a thrilling tale.

Then to supply a change from the romance the Scribe of the town appeared. He made a living by drawing up petitions for the unskilled, writing letters for the illiterate, and by keeping a record of events, culled from all sources, which he read to the public. Sure of an audience at the palace gate, he came there with scroll under his arm, reed pen on his ear, suspended ink-pot in his hand—and bag at his girdle. The crowd at the serai hailed him.

"Read to us, O veracious Scribe, the wondrous events thou hast recorded."

"Show your thank-offerings," the Scribe answered, holding out the bag.

The multitude dropped small coins into the bag. The Scribe counted the money.

"Thanks, my masters," he said acidly. "Fifteen coppers, and not one small silver. What wondrous events do you expect for that?"

A prosperous merchant fumbled at his waistband and dropped a quarter-rupee into the bag. One or two others did likewise.

"By Sarasthi, with such munificence I shall soon provide my daughter's dowry," the Scribe exclaimed; but whether in sincerity or in irony the multitude could not tell; they were used to both. "However this must suffice for to-day, as needs it must."

He set down the ink-pot, took out the scroll and opened it.

"Gather round, my friends, gather round. Hear with your ears, and keep your mouths shut. Six moons ago the Heaven-born, whose coming we now await, heard of the death of his father—upon whose soul be peace! The Heaven-born had then reached Japan on his way home, and struck by the wondrous things he saw there he deemed six months not too long to study them. Yet he would have returned forthwith on his father's death—upon whose soul again be peace!—save for the injunction to remain. In the six months he has laboured hard. The Japanese, ever alert, have helped him much, showing him most of the progress they have made. Two years ago we bought all our matches from Europe: now all India buys them cheaper from Japan. So the Japanese have shown the Heaven-born other things of household use that they can supply us cheaper than Europe; but looking farther ahead, he desires that we should make some of these things ourselves,

and has engaged a band of Japanese instructors to teach us the new enterprises. Wherefore in due course we may have several Japanese amongst us, and though their mission may not always be avowed, we must regard them as our friends." The Scribe opened a new page of the scroll and continued :—

"In Barathpur itself public affairs have now reached a most important stage. For five years the British Resident has been advocating changes that he avers are essential reforms. Of these the main suggestion is that the dewan should no longer be the practical ruler, as at present, assisted by the heads of departments. Instead the Prince should rule directly, advised by a Council composed of those heads of departments. The present system is indeed of long usage, but so was the former system in Japan when the Mikado remained behind the scene like a veiled Prophet, and the actual work of government was carried out by his representative, the Shogun. The change to the direct rule of the Mikado is deemed to be the prime cause of the extraordinary progress of Japan in recent years ; and it may be likewise with Barathpur. That is the essence of the plea for the change suggested by the British Resident."

"And the reason against ?" cried a voice from the populace.

"Ask the dewan," the Scribe answered in sarcasm. "The writing of the reason may be sedition ; and I read to you only what is written." Saying this, he resumed the scroll and continued :—

"Among other suggestions of the British Resident the most important are the abolition of the practically compulsory dowry in marriage (which often impoverishes a father of many daughters), the abolition or modifica-

tion of the Joint-Family-System (which encourages the improvident members to live at the expense of the prudent), and the legalisation of widow-marriage. The British Resident now retires from office hoping that the new Resident will have more influence with the new Prince in carrying out these reforms."

"Is that written, or only the talk of the town?" asked a passer-by sneeringly. A group of horsemen were emerging from the palace courtyard, and the multitude fell back in the questioner's path and made him pause.

"It is written," the Scribe answered, looking into his face. "What is written is written—even if it be I that write it. The talk of the town is made by idle passers-by who add to or subtract from what is written. So close thy big mouth and open thy long ears." Resuming the scroll, the Scribe read on :—

"All these innovations the dewan opposes; and his councillors are with him. Madhava, whose advice as vakil is of great weight, is equally opposed—save in one thing."

"And that?" the populace asked in curiosity.

The horsemen from the palace were emerging through the gate, and the Scribe caught the expectant gaze of one of them at the mention of Madhava's name.

"Widow-marriage," answered the Scribe, noting the horseman's curling lips. "He consents to legalise it; nay, advocates it."

"So the fool still seeks to *buy* the ripe fruit that is ready to fall into his hand from the adjoining garden without payment!" Prem Singh laughed in scorn. "Methinks it would serve the fool right if some one entered the garden and plucked the fruit away!"

The cavalcade passed on; and the multitude did not

understand the meaning of Prem Singh's words. The Scribe, impatient of these interruptions, was closing his scroll to depart.

"Read a little more, O truthful recorder," the populace cried.

"Not yet had your coppers' worth? Then I shall read a trifle more. At the coming of our new ruler his beloved caste-brother, Prince Udai of Chitorgarh, will be present to greet him. He will arrive the same morning, and as his sister Princess Suvona accompanies him in her palanquin, they have set out already. So the women's quarter of the palace will be used again, and is now being made ready. The prettiest of your daughters may enter the service of the palace, which means a speedy marriage for them and on a smaller dowry. Further, there will be high festival for you, with palace bounty in the courtyard and in the city. Above all, at the coming of our Prince, the populace will be permitted to stand beyond the archways and see him mount the throne of his ancestors. Which is the last and best thing I have to say to you. *Barath ke jai!*"

And the multitude answered, "*Barath, aor Barath ka musnud, ke jai!*" Glory to Barath and the throne of Barath.

Crying this, the populace went on their way.

On the day of Barath's arrival there was an impressive scene at the palace. Built in accordance with national custom, the throne-room was flanked on the outer side by two rows of arches, the space between the rows forming a corridor which led at one end to the outer palace, and at the other to the inner. Beyond the arches

there was a large open terrace where the populace could stand and see their ruler and the enactment of all public events of high import. Within the inner row of arches, however, there was a heavy curtain, now drawn up to the roof above the arches, but which could be let down to exclude the gaze of all on the terrace and in the corridor, and thus convert the throne-room into a private chamber.

The throne, placed on a dais, was of carved ivory inlaid with gems. To the right of the throne a movable seat was placed, upon the dais, but raised not quite to the level of the throne. It was intended for Udai. There was no other seat in the chamber. At the back of the dais an arched door, hung with curtains, gave access to the inner palace. Thus the throne-room was so constructed that not only could it be made a public court or a private chamber at will because of the curtains before the corridor on the outer side, but it was also the vantage-ground from which its owner could turn one way and face the world as a ruler, a prince of high degree, aye, a conqueror—or turning the other way could retire into an inner sanctuary as but a man of flesh and blood, to feel, to suffer, or to find comfort. . . .

And now the throne-room was all agog with bustle and excitement. The palace guards were drawn up on either side, their captain, Harnam, standing like a carved statue at the central arch, to the admiration of the multitude on the terrace. To him came Moolraj, accompanied by Madhava.

“Know, ye guards of the palace and ye men of Barathpur,” Moolraj spoke aloud, waving his hand first towards the guards, then towards the populace, “that after an absence of six years from the home of his

ancestors Prince Barath returns to us this day. When he left us for that great land beyond the seas, he was the heir to his father's realm ; now he is our ruler. Prepare to welcome him worthily." That was the brief official announcement.

But to relieve his feelings of joy at his young master's return he drew Harnam and Madhava into the chamber and told them all over again for the seventh time little episodes of Barath's boyhood that he had treasured up in his heart. Then he heard the sound of horses drawing near.

"Here comes Prince Udai, his caste-brother and the comrade of his youth, to join us in welcoming him."

Arriving from Chitorgarh with a large escort for his sister, on reaching the gate of Barathpur Udai had galloped ahead with six men. At the staircase of the palace he sprang off his horse, and went up to the throne-room. Moolraj received him at the central arch.

"*Salaam alekhum*, Kumar Sahib," he said, saluting with his right hand, the guards doing likewise.

"*Alekhum salaam*, Moolraj," Udai answered. "Is it well with thee ?"

"By the favour of thy countenance, Kumar Sahib, it is well."

"And is it well with you also," Udai asked of Madhava and Harnam as they salaamed to him.

"This day, Kumar Sahib," Moolraj hastened to answer for them, "is of the happiest augury for us all."

"Aye, for you and yours," Udai said, thinking of the future.

Instantly understanding the suggestion, Moolraj, Madhava, and Harnam exclaimed, "For us and our children, and our children's children."

"And perchance for me and mine," Udai thought inwardly. Yes, the renewal of friendship with Barath would be a pleasure to Udai—in which his sister would share. Her palanquin was entering the palace.

The curtain behind the throne parted, the door opened, and a dozen young girls appeared. They were all of gentle birth, selected as companions for Suvona. They awaited her palanquin at the corridor. Udai stepped to the palanquin and helped his sister to alight. She was veiled, and walked with her brother to the far end of the chamber. As she passed, Moolraj, Madhava, and Harnam silently salaamed, and withdrew with the guards to the central arch at the corridor to be out of hearing.

"At last, dear sister, our dream is fulfilled," Udai said to Suvona tenderly. "He is with us again!"

"After six long years!" Yea, that was the one thought in her mind, and all that the long absence might have wrought.

"Thou wert but a child when he left for England, and the thoughts of childhood are not lasting."

"And now I am a woman," she answered, unveiling to him. "Yet my thoughts this hour are the thoughts of the hour I last saw him. They could not change."

"Yes, Suvona; I have realised that—too well."

"Then dost fear for me?"

"Nay, my sister; but still we must expect some change in him. In England he has gone through new scenes, perhaps a new world. They must have left some impress upon his mind."

"And upon his heart?"

"Perhaps even upon his heart."

"Yet, fain would I deem his nature to be changeless in its strength, eternal."

“ True ; but the most immutable nature, the strongest character, is susceptible to environments and subject to the lapse of time. Our body changes in seven years ; then perhaps also our minds. So, dear Suvona, I would, if I could, persuade thee not to feel too deeply, but to restrain thy heart awhile.” Yet to cheer her he added, “ Still let us rejoice this day ; for his heart may return to us all the stronger because of the absence.”

A messenger entered the corridor hot-foot. Moolraj saw him, and hastened to Udai with the tidings.

“ Kumar Sahib, the Master’s approach has been signalled from the watch-tower of the citadel.”

“ I must leave thy side a moment,” Udai said to his sister. “ Meanwhile let thy women attend on thee.”

The maids-of-honour brought the movable seat from the dais to Suvona, and placed it with its back to the men ; when she was seated they removed their own veils, opened the jewel-case, and adorned the princess. For if they had done this even in the last stage of the journey, the motion of the palanquin would have disarrayed the forty-rayed star upon the brow.

Meanwhile Udai went to the central arch, and waved his hand to the people in the chamber to arrange themselves. The guards came and stood in two lines facing each other, the space between forming a passage from the central arch to the middle of the chamber. The dozen girls went to the back of the throne, and waited by the door of the inner palace to escort Suvona to her apartments. Moolraj, Madhava, and Harnam stood at the head of the guards. Then Udai returned to his sister. He looked at her critically.

“ Suvona, such beauty as thine is more than human. Verily thou art a peri from Indra’s court ! ”

She tossed her head and smiled. "A brother says that!"

"And a hundred lovers would, if they but saw thee. Methinks it is well we have no 'Bride's Choice' now; for after thy choice there might be war by the disappointed suitors against the favoured one."¹

She laughed, with a tinge of bitterness in her voice she could not suppress. "Even though my choice were made already?" The sound of a conch shell came to her from the outer palace. "Hush! away with trifling!" For the sound heralded the entrance of the High Priest—and the beginning of the actual drama, the actual conflict, in which she might have to stake earth and heaven alike.

Let us consider awhile Vashista, the High Priest. He was now an old man of seventy-five, slim and tall, but erect. His clean-shaven face was thin, having in the long years of abstemious life lost all superfluous flesh; but that moderation in satisfying his material wants, combined with the absence of all artificial stimulants, had served to maintain unimpaired his constitutional vigour. With most men even an occasional over-dose of luxury in middle age might in time clog the body with superfluous residues, which in old age could only be removed at the expense of some portion at least of the remaining stock of vital energy. So Vashista now reaped the benefit of his long abstemiousness, and his physical vigour and mental activity at seventy-five were scarcely less than what they were at fifty. The iron

¹ The former historical ceremony of choosing the bridegroom from among the assembled suitors. The bride, unveiled, stood before them, hearing their suit, then chose the favoured one by placing a garland around his neck.

will that had first prompted him to begin the great task of his life, and had carried him through a generation, now directed him to complete the task.

His position was strangely complex. As *dewan*, he was the practical administrator of the State : as the High Priest of Vishnu he was in some sense its spiritual head. There is nothing in India corresponding exactly to Papal authority ; but still no Hindu ever ceases to be a devotee of Vishnu ; hence as the High Priest of Vishnu Vashista could claim the spiritual allegiance of all in Barathpur. Regarding the palace, he had been Barath's *guru*, his personal spiritual guide, equivalent to a confessor in Catholic Europe ; and though in later years the actual task of guidance could be undertaken by others, the original relationship, once established, had to last throughout life ; once the *guru*, for ever the *guru*. Moreover, Vashista, since he had been dwelling in the palace, had become by the mere convenience of his presence the *poraheeth* of the palace—the “chaplain” and “parish priest” combined ; and although the actual work for the thousand-and-one lesser inmates of the palace in domestic affairs, births, deaths, and marriages, was delegated to his assistant Ramanand, the sign and deed was Vashista's or executed in his name. In the case of the Prince's family alone the task was Vashista's as well as the sign-manual.

To sum up, Vashista's position was akin to that of some great Cardinal-Minister, with the power of a Richelieu or a Mazarin, who was also, like Wolsey, the keeper of his Prince's conscience, and moreover who was, like a Papal Legate, armed with the thunders of Rome. Such a position could only be held in India ; and even in India it had taken Vashista twenty-five years to

attain it; twenty-five years of foresight, of concentrated purpose, of strenuous labour, above all, of self-denial and self-immolation.

It was this man who now entered the throne-room. He passed down the space between the rows of guards. The men salaamed, the women bowed their heads. Vashista extended his hands in blessing over them all, and seeing Suvona unveiled, wherefore unable to turn, he went up to her and Udai across the chamber. They bowed their heads, and he placed his hands upon them.

"Vishnu's blessings upon thee, O Prince. And Lakmé's choicest gifts upon thee, my daughter." He lowered his hands, and turned aside to converse with them; for being a priest and aged, he could behold Suvona unveiled. "It is six moons since I saw you last. Meanwhile has it been well with you and your house?" he asked them.

"Yea, father, by thy prayers," Udai answered.

"And with thee especially, my daughter? Has Parvathi been gracious to thee? Nay, could the benign goddess do aught but smile upon thee?" He spoke cheerily. But a while later, when the message came that Barath was entering the outer gate, and Udai accompanied Moolraj to the end of the corridor to see that all was in order, Vashista's words to Suvona revealed the anxiety in his mind.

"So far my prayers have been answered: he has come back to us in safety. But thine?"

"Father, my prayers are as countless as the sands of the sea. Could they be answered in a single day?"

"Nay, but the greatest of them all?"

"That he has returned," Suvona replied, with downcast eyes. "All else is in Lakmé's hands."

"Verily, the goddess herself has given thee wisdom." Bowing his head, he added, "May she also grant thee the fulfilment of the dearest wish of thy heart !"

Suvona started. "If it be possible !"

"Why not ?"

"Some wishes are like dreams," Suvona answered. "They are best when we are asleep ; for they vanish when we awake. At a distance they seem a part of our being and within the reach of our hope ; near at hand the mere creation of our fancy."

"Distance—six years ago ? Near at hand—this very day ?" He had read her thoughts. "How old wert thou when he left us ?"

"Eleven ; only eleven," she replied wistfully. "Have I changed so that he will not know me now ?" She said that in anxiety.

But the High Priest answered her with admiration in his eyes. "Aye, the opening rosebud is now in its sweetest bloom !"

"Then all the more shall I be a stranger to him. When he bade me farewell he called me his sister. It was then enough."

"Art not happy in thy sisterhood ?"

"Yes, happy ; for my sisterhood is all I have." Then a sudden protest arose within her. "Yet he is not my brother. I *have* a brother—Udai."

"And Barath—what is he to thee ? Upon thy word may hang the fate of us all ! Then answer me, as if I were thy father."

But in agitation she had turned away from him, and would not answer.

He came to her and laid his right hand upon her head.

“ Tell it to me, my daughter ; it will hurt thee less to speak. What is Barath to thee ? ”

Her voice faltered. “ The life of my soul—and the soul of my life.”

“ And thou—what art thou to him ? ”

“ Father, I have told thee. He called me his sister.”

The High Priest hesitated, then whispered to her, “ Wouldst thou be more ? Nay, do not answer. I understand. Who should but I—I that for ten long years have cherished a dream in my heart.” His voice was full of tenderness. “ Yes, Suvona, thy dearest wish is my dearest wish. . . . And thy fear, my fear ! ”

She started in apprehension. “ That in England he has gone through new scenes——”

“ Perhaps a new life, a new world ! ” he cried in bitterness. “ What fascinations, what enticements, what allurements have cast their net beneath his feet ? The gambler, the tipster, the siren, what eager efforts have they made to lie in wait in his path ? Verily a thousand traps are laid for the downfall of a prince ! ”

Yet at the mention of these Suvona’s apprehension lessened. “ Would they know him for a prince ? He went there but as a student ; one among many.”

“ Were he but garbed in cut cloth of commonest black, they would know him : his princehood is written upon his brow. . . . Nay, I understand thee : such perils could never harm him ; he is above them. Our fear rests upon a nobler basis—his own heart. Verily, pampered and lionised, with flattery and incense around him—aye, even unconscious enchantments enveloping and captivating him——”

“ Then even these I do not fear.”

“ Oh, Suvona, I do not know England, but I do not

trust her. Even if no woman has touched his heart—of which I am not sure—perhaps England herself has. Verily the new customs he has practised there may not affect him in the home of his ancestors ; but his mental attitude and his ideals may have altered. He may at every turn unconsciously compare our aspect with the English in the vital things of life, and find no flavour in us. How wouldst thou like that ? How wouldst thou like to be mentally compared to some English-woman—and be deemed wanting ? Oh, Suvona, we must combine to show him that our thoughts are better, our deeds are better, our ideals are better ; our men and our women. Wilt fulfil thy share of the task ? ”

“ It is my duty,” she humbly answered.

“ Duty, duty ? I tell thee it is destiny, not duty ! Shall I rouse thee to frenzy, and set thee on fire ? ”

A fierce conflict raged within him. For twenty-five years he had retained a faith in his heart, and though breathing it a thousand times as a veiled suggestion to the world, and even permitting Barath's parents to share in it partially, he had never voiced that inward faith to mortal man, explicitly and completely—save to Viswa-mitra, his original participant in the faith. Now something wrenched from him the secret of a life-time and impelled him to reveal it to Suvona.

“ Child, child, dost know *thy* destiny ? Come to me ; let me pour it into thy ear. Art on fire to know it ? Then burn, burn—with the divinest flame ! Art ready to hear ? Then call on Durga to sustain thee, lest thou be consumed in the fire of heaven ! ”

“ Goddess, sustain me, or I die ! ” In that supreme moment her voice was broken, not exultant. She

trembled with emotion as she stood, then was strengthened.

“It is well!” The High Priest spoke with concentrated passion. “Dost know the prophecy? Behold, it is written: out of the House of Rama shall come forth he that is to unite all Barath-barsha, and rebuild the walls of Indraprastha. Dost understand? The promised manifestation of Krishna is now due! It is written that he shall sit upon the throne of Rama, and rule all Barath-barsha. And, Suvona, dost know: beside him shall sit unveiled the loveliest woman of her age. Dost understand me? Wouldst thou be that woman?”

“Cease, father, cease!” she cried in anguish, breaking away from him, trembling. “I do not understand thee—I fear to understand thee!”

“Nay, it is so! Suvona, knowest thou the fulfilment of the prophecy in *him*? Verily it was fulfilled in him from the first; for he bears the mark of prophecy—the mark of Krishna! Yea, and all other signs were fulfilled at his birth. He is the promised One!”

“Barath?” It was scarce a whisper that came from Suvona’s lips.

“Yea, Barath!”

She stood motionless, her eyes closed, her lips slightly parted. What sound was that in her ear? Barath was just entering the inner gate, and the voice of the populace greeting him reached the palace as the distant surging of waves. To Suvona the sound was not external, but the echo of some inward enactment, some scene in her mind of a proclamation by the gods. Her lips moved.

"What vision is this—what wondrous vision of splendour unfolds before me? My sight is dazzled, my senses thrilled with the glory destined for my beloved—my beloved! Power shall be in his right hand, mercy in his left, and he shall be above all men godlike. . . . See, see, the Chohan, the Rahtor—the Sesodia, the Agnikool—all bow down before him and call him Master!"

Awaking from the ecstasy she asked, "And the woman destined to sit beside him—is it——"

"She that is brave enough!" the High Priest answered. "She that strives her uttermost to make herself worthy of that destiny." Coming nearer and gazing into her eyes, he added, "She that accepts such weapons as are granted her, and does battle for that destiny—aye, seizes it within her grasp! Dost understand me?"

"Too well! But would that be—love?"

"Even love. Love at times needs guidance. Shall I tell thee? She who wins his heart must possess the very soul of love, aye, its frenzy, its immolation. Thus would she deserve her own bliss."

"Is not that selfish love—even to seek to deserve her own happiness?"

"Selfish? Shall I fire thee? Is it nothing that the woman helps him to attain the highest destiny possible to man? Is that no return? . . . And, Suvona, thou art the one woman on earth who can do that!"

What glory was this for a woman—to believe, to feel, to realise, that she alone could give to the man she loved his highest destiny—and that the highest possible to a mortal? Did Suvona exult, or was there in her heart a new "Magnificat"? Verily there was

instead an overwhelming consciousness that she had done nothing in this life to deserve so high a glory : the karma of a thousand bygone lives combined might perchance justify it. That was the dim dawning hope in her heart ; but fearing to presume so high as even to clutch at the hope or give it utterance, she stood silent with bowed head. When a queen of half the earth might have justly exulted.

“ Is that enough, Suvona, or shall I tell thee yet more ? Thou hast already two motives for winning Barath—first thy love for him as man, and then thy help in placing him upon a pinnacle as the New Krishna. A third remains : compassion for thy people ; for the New Krishna must raise up his people anew. What glory for a woman is one of these ! And all three, Suvona, are destined for thee ! ”

“ Father, hear me.” She raised up her glistening eyes to him. Her lips quivered ; a teardrop trickled down and lay on her cheek. “ I am only a woman, fragile and weak. I seek no glory ; I would rather cling to my beloved, and just love him, love him, love him each moment of my life. That would be my heaven.”

“ O sweet Suvona ! ” the High Priest exulted, “ now I know thou art the woman ! Lakmé alone could have given thee such sweetness ! It is enough—I rejoice ! Go in peace.”

As she turned to depart, he whispered to her, “ Remember the love and the frenzy, and perchance the immolation.”

“ That I shall never forget. The immolation shall be my glory, my joy, my heaven.”

She withdrew into the inner palace by the door behind the throne, escorted by the maidens.

And now a hush fell upon the throne-room. The voices of the multitude at the inner gate had ceased, and the populace on the terrace waited with bated breath. Udai and Moolraj had returned, and now stood at the head of the guards. Udai's seat was now replaced on the dais, but he would not occupy it till he had greeted his caste-brother and had seen him upon his throne.

A trumpet blast greeted their ears ; a brief while and a second ; then a third from the foot of the staircase. A column of foot-guards, two abreast, mounted the stairs, and entered the corridor. Seeing them, the multitude on the terrace loosened their tongues.

"Jai ! Jai ! Maharajah !"

"Maharajah ke jai !" came the response from the courtyard below.

"Barath ke jai !" swelled the voices of all as their new ruler entered the central arch of the throne-room.

The two lines of guards within drew their swords and crossed them aloft to form an arch of steel. Barath walked beneath it.

Udai embraced him, saying, "Thrice happy is the day that brings thee back to us. Welcome, brother, to the home of thy ancestors and thy throne."

"And thrice happy that makes me behold thy face again," Barath answered. "In this long absence my thoughts have ever been with thee and thy house." Turning to the High Priest, his *guru*, he bowed his head. "Father, thy blessing."

Vashista extended his hands over him, saying, "This supreme day ! My blessing has ever been with thee in spirit : this moment may it rest upon thee and guide

thee to thy throne. Thy throne of promise ! ” This he added slowly.

Barath gazed at him a moment, trying to understand his hidden meaning. In medieval Europe the ears of kings and princes were attuned to hear words and phrases that meant nothing to the people around, but to them revealed the making or unmaking of a nation. But the fulness of time had not yet come, and Barath did not understand. Inclining his head in acceptance of whatever his throne might imply, he turned towards it slowly, ascended the dais, and sat upon the ivory *musnud*. The High Priest again raised his hands in blessing till Barath was seated, his eyes gazing upon the Prince intently ; then lowering his hands, he came and stood at the right of the dais. Udai mounted the dais and sat beside Barath.

In silence Barath was now robed. A group of attendants entered from the palace by the corridor, approached the foot of the dais, knelt, and ascended. They placed around Barath a choga of cloth-of-gold, an aigrette of diamonds upon his turban, and jewelled shoes on his feet. In this there was no ostentation or ceremony ; it was just what might be done every week if an occasion for robing happened to arise.

Moolraj, the Comptroller of the Palace, first approached the throne to do homage. He mounted the steps of the dais, knelt at the foot of the throne, held up his sword by the scabbard with both hands, and silently offered the hilt to his master. The seemingly cold dignity of a ruler first seated upon his throne may in reality be caused by a newly-begotten sense of isolation, a sense of separation from the world, in which the cold dignity is nothing more than a state of mental abstraction

produced by the very sense of isolation. Barath, seated erect and gazing before him in abstraction, saw Moolraj kneel. His face was instantly familiar to Barath as a face ; but the six years had wrought some changes in it, and Moolraj's office was new. Barath's eyes dwelt on him a moment, and then there flashed through his mind the events of the past seven months since his father's death, and he recognised the new Comptroller. He bent forward, laid his right hand lightly on the proffered hilt, and his left on the old man's shoulder.

"Moolraj, is it thou ? Moolraj, the friend of my childhood, my first teacher in all princely deeds—have these years of my absence lain so heavily on thee ? I see the grey upon thy beard that was not there before : have thy cares then been so deep—or does my selfish judgment fail ? These six years have been to me but six days : to thee were they six centuries ? But now see I have returned to thy care, and no peril can befall me. Dost remember the time when I was ever in thy care, from the morning call to the watches of the night ? And the day of peril also, Moolraj ? I was but a child then, only twelve. It was our first tiger hunt, and thou didst guide my aim. Though its heart was shattered, the huge tiger leapt in its death agony to the rock upon which we lay, seeking to kill its killer. . . ." He closed his eyes a moment, and his voice grew soft. "*I* swooned away, still clutching the smoking rifle in my hand, but *thou* didst snatch me away in thy arms, child that I was, from before the dying beast's last spasmodic grip. Dost remember, Moolraj ? . . . And in these latter days, these last seven months"—his voice quivered—"when my people were without a ruler,

didst thou guard the house of my ancestors, my faithful steward? Aye, for seventeen generations thou and thy house have served me and mine. What return can I make?" He took a ring from his finger, and placed it upon Moolraj's. "Let it be this. I shall redeem it at thy will."

For in the East the pledge implied that if ever the ruler bent his mind to a purpose, the return of the ring would turn him from it, save where honour was involved.

Stirred to his deepest heart, Moolraj made obeisance with hands on brow, arose, then in sudden emotion knelt down again, and kissed Barath's right hand passionately, silently.

He withdrew, and Harnam stepped forth to do homage as the Captain of the Guards. In like manner he knelt down and offered the hilt of his sword. Barath knew him forthwith: the change in him from twenty-four years of age to thirty had been immaterial. Barath altered his tone.

"Harnam, my gay cavalier? In truth Time has touched thee lightly: spruce and debonair as ever? Perchance merry deeds and gay company have kept thee youthful. Methinks I heard the tale of the pink veil thou didst mysteriously receive yester-year. Dost still cherish it, wearing it next thy heart?" The guards in the chamber and the men in the corridor averted their heads and smiled; and the High Priest held up his hand by his face, shocked. Noting these, Barath continued: "Dost still seek to find the beautiful owner of the veil, to offer her³ thy hand and heart in honourable marriage?" Thus rebuked, the men faced round again. "Then so be it. Go and prosper. I will that young men and maidens shall marry in my

kingdom, for their earthly happiness and spiritual guidance ! ”

As Harnam retired, the guards approached, knelt two by two, and offered the hilts of their swords, which Barath touched, one with each hand. Then Madhava came with a small silver salver in his hand containing spices for a civil homage. The military homage of Moolraj, Harnam, and the guards represented one aspect of the palace : Madhava's included the rest of the palace ; it also represented the homage of the nation.

On entering into possession of his heritage Barath would speak thrice to his people, giving them three messages to inaugurate his reign. Through Moolraj gratitude for long and faithful service ; through Harnam hope for the personal happiness of his people : and now Madhava remained. In London Barath had spoken to him in English, and could do so again in lesser moments. Now in sight of his people he addressed him in their mother-tongue ; for the message was to all Barathpur.

“ And thou, Madhava,” he said, touching the salver, “ my astute lawyer with thy hoondies, writs, and attachments ! What revenue hast thou collected in my absence ? Are my treasures full of taxes ? It is well ! Wouldst seek the prosperity of all Barathpur by strenuous labour and bold enterprise ? It is well ! Wouldst promote the welfare of the people by strengthening the treasury first, and then opening new industries ? So far it is well : but now I tell thee, remit all taxes from moon to moon for six moons, in memory of my returning. And to every peasant touched by drought give from my storehouse three bushels of wheat, of rice seven *maunds*, of oils three *seers*—full measure and

overflowing. For this auspicious day my people shall rejoice with me."

The populace heard the message, and shouted to the heavens—

"*Jai ! Jai ! Barath ke jai !*"

"Victory to our noble Prince !" the guards responded, flashing their swords.

"Blood-brother to the glorious Barath !" their Captain cried aloud, directing their thoughts to a supreme comparison.

"To divine Rama !" Moolraj held his sword aloft, facing the populace. They caught the inspiration, and shouted anew—

"Victory, victory to Rama !"

Then a sudden hush fell upon them all.

"Krishna !" It was the deep, sonorous voice of the High Priest. They saw him standing beside the dais, his right hand extended upwards, the forefinger pointed.

The men in the chamber, in the corridor, and beyond, were hushed in awe. They bent their bodies forward to hear Barath speak. The High Priest's suggestion was not yet completed : it lay with Barath to define it, confirm it, accept it.

Starting to his feet, Barath had risen from the throne, his hands flung up to his breast, the palms turned outwards. Thus he stood a moment, gazing straight before him, seeking light. Some overwhelming emotion surged through him, swaying his body gently. His lips moved, but no sound came : perchance it was an invocation, a prayer. But light was not granted him. He flung down his hands, and bowed his head.

The High Priest understood. Turning to Barath,

he said softly, " Yet awhile, a little while, and the mysteries shall be revealed." And as Barath still stood silent with bowed head, Vashista again understood, and waved his hand to all to depart. For Barath sought solitude.

The populace departed ; Moolraj, Harnam, and the guards departed, saluting ; Madhava salaaming. Udai took Barath's hand in his own, held it in silence, and in silence departed. Vashista alone remained.

Then Barath's lips moved, and words came forth. " Yet awhile, and the mysteries shall be revealed ! "

" Aye ! Yet awhile, and Vishnu himself will explain, not I." But departing, Vashista paused at the curtains before the corridor, which were now pulled down. He turned to Barath and added, " Within the hour I shall be with thee again, to show thee anew the home of thy childhood—where I was thy *guru*, and thou my *chela*."

Thus he left Barath—to sit upon his throne in solitude and find inspiration, or to go into the inner palace and find rest.

Within the hour, when the sun was low on the western horizon, Barath and Vashista walked in the gardens of the inner palace.

" Dost remember this pool, this grove, this streamlet ? Thou didst play here with Delini and the children of the thakurs. Dost hear the murmuring of waters from the hillock beyond the champak grove ? That is the streamlet which on reaching the earth-level becomes the River of Life : there on a certain day the maidens of thy kingdom with hope and fear come to know their fate. That glade on the sunset side of the palace ?

There the song-birds nest, the kokil and the bulbul, to lull thee to sleep."

Thus the High Priest reminded Barath of the home of his forefathers. It was a custom, merely pretty in the case of others, on returning from distant lands. In the case of Barath Vashista intended it to be something more—knowing not, yet fearing, the alien impressions upon Barath's heart.

"Dost know, my son, awhile ago the refreshment thou didst take for the first time on returning was blest by me with special rites—the rites of thy *anaprashan* when thou wert a child and didst first eat from the hand of man. Twice-born thou art, and twice-born shalt thou remain; but for thy *mantra* and initiation into the supreme mysteries of life I must wait till thou hast taken a wife. Remember, my son, that though the Christian may receive confirmation in childhood, the Hindu may not receive his *mantra* till he has attained his fullest manhood; and then the sanction and participation of his wife is essential. Verily the wife of the Hindu has power over his soul, and her position is higher than that of any other wife on earth. Dost remember even the case of divine Rama, Krishna's predecessor in the sovereignty of Barath-barsha? The assembled kings proclaimed him suzerain, but in the 'great sacrifice' which Rama had to offer on acceptance the sanction and participation of his wife was essential: and in her absence Rama had to use her golden image instead. So for thy *mantra* take a wife, or make for her a golden image."

What words were these? The veiled comparison with Rama Barath may have missed or ignored, but the reference to his future wife was tangible: she must

be such as to fulfil all the conditions demanded by his faith. He knew that from boyhood, but in the intervening years had given it no thought, and his mind was still full of Western impressions. That marriage was a necessity he knew, but had almost forgotten : not that he had actually resolved to remain unmarried, but that the idea of marriage was absent from his mind. The High Priest now recalled it to him, and also the necessity for the performance of the *mantra*. But having done so as if by a passing suggestion, Vashista wisely turned from the subject, and conversed on Barath's travels. He laid aside the attitude of Barath's spiritual guide, and spoke merely as an old friend. He desired in his mind that Barath should unbosom himself to him.

"How didst thou fare in England?" he casually asked after awhile, when they were returning from the gardens.

"Well. Excellently well," Barath answered.

"In all things?"

"In most things." By nature truthful, Barath had also acquired the habit in his conversations with Wingate and Thompson of applying qualifications to his statements, lest perchance he overstated anything.

Vashista noted the qualification. "And the exception? In what then was it not excellently well with thee?"

"In regard to a dream," Barath answered simply.

"A dream? Wherefore, a wish. Attainable?"

"Most unlikely. It is a far cry from England to India."

"Aye, England and India are a world apart. There

is nothing in common between them." Which had always been the essence of Vashista's mental attitude.

"No, father ; they are next-door neighbours," Barath said in rising emotion. "In India we love our deep conservatism ; in England they cherish their national institutions. In that we are like brothers."

Vashista was disconcerted a moment. "Any other similarity thou hast noted ?"

"Aye, their caste-laws. In England they have caste-laws as strong as ours."

"Except that our basis of caste is blood, theirs money," Vashista answered, rebelling at the comparison. "In India an ounce of blue-blood is worth a cart-load of gold: in England, I have heard, the son of a beer-bottler may marry the daughter of a peer—if he has millions enough."

"Not always. With the old aristocracy of England blood counts more than gold."

"And the differences, my son ? Hast forgotten them—the wide gulf between England and India in all other things ?"

"None are essential. There is no gulf between England and India that cannot be bridged with a little understanding, a little truthfulness, a little forgiveness—on both sides. So let us begin by forgiving all things that we may end by understanding all things."

The High Priest bowed his head. "Verily I have said thou art destined to be the teacher of thy teachers." But thinking awhile in silence, a revolt surged up in his heart. "Yet I protest that the fulfilment of my words can only imply keeping England and India apart—yea, half the planet's girth apart." For his inward conception of Barath's mission implied just that.

Barath answered him. His heart also was vibrating with emotion. "Father, something bids me labour my uttermost to bring England and India together, and unite them in ties of affection stronger far than triple steel—aye, almost as man and woman."

Vashista started at the comparison. A vague apprehension smote him. "And which country wouldst thou make the man, and which the woman?"

Barath paused. They were now standing by the pool nearest the inner palace. Gazing into the water and resting his hand on the hilt of his sword, Barath answered musingly, "India the man. Because it is the older."

Vashista's apprehension grew deeper. So England was the woman? A woman! Some woman! An *English* woman!

He disguised his fear, and asked casually, "Didst thou not find the women of England different from ours?"

"Very different," Barath answered, writing on the sand with the tip of his scabbard.

"For the better?"

"In some things."

"More beautiful?"

Barath continued to write, but now it was not words, nor aimless lines; it was just a letter that the tip of the scabbard formed spontaneously. "Why compare?" Barath said, and relapsed into thought. Unconsciously the scabbard went over the letter several times, making it deeper in the sand. It was the letter N. Gazing at Barath's face intently, Vashista did not notice it. Barath himself was not aware that he had written it. It was merely that there was in the back of his memory such a letter signing the postscript to a message he had

received when he had seen the sender for the last time. . . .

Breaking away from his thoughts he looked up and said, "There may be a thousand beautiful women in each country. She who is the loveliest of them all"—Vashista bent forward eagerly—"is for a favoured lover to declare."

"True, my son, true. When thy time comes, thou shalt find the loveliest of them all!"

Barath felt that to be impossible, and the contemplation of the subject, not as a memory, but in regard to actual fulfilment in his future life, was painful. He tried to turn away from it, but the High Priest continued: "More beautiful than any thou hast seen in England there may be one——"

"Father, why harp only on one chord?"

"Is it not then a chord of gold in thy harp—thy future wife?"

Barath grew impatient. "Father, listen. What have I seen of women, high-born women, in my own country? Nothing! Children, yes; children with whom I played and who were to me as little sisters. Besides them I saw but Delini and my mother—peace to her soul! Delini was sweet and tender, and even somewhat pretty—though not like my mother."

"And she was?"

"The most beautiful woman in all India," Barath answered softly—"my mother!"

Then there came into Vashista's voice a note of triumph. "Even as she was in the fullest bloom of her youth, there may be one like her now. A maiden of exalted rank and transcendent beauty."

"Where?" Barath asked, but without care.

“Search and find,” Vashista answered, waving his hand to east and west. “From the rising to the setting sun.”

Barath gazed at the setting sun, and was wrapt in thought. Having his mind lingering on the west, he cared not to search all earth.

Turning to depart, Vashista said again, “Search and find !”

“Search and find ?” Barath murmured, still gazing at the sunset. “In ten long years !”

“Or this very day. Whichever be thy destiny.” Then from the porch of the inner palace the High Priest said for the third time, “Search and find !”

Barath remained to commune with his thoughts, gazing at the western sky. In fancy he travelled beyond the horizon, and the clouds took strange shapes, tinged with a thousand colours. In fancy he read the shapes and found in them memories of England ; of Kensington and Boscombe. A sense of melancholy stole over him, and a vague yearning for the comfort of Ellen’s arms : with a shock he realised what the denial of that comfort meant to him. Oh, was this a home-coming ? Then why that sense of desolation ?

When in boyhood he had left home he had at least his father’s love, and the memories of his mother of earlier years. But now returning in manhood he felt the loss of his father’s love ; and the memories of his mother, though still precious, now seemed different—because he could only think of his mother in the attitude of childhood and not of manhood. His new mother, Ellen, could alone have satisfied his need of parental love in manhood ; and from Ellen he had parted, perhaps forever. Delini remained, but she was far away ;

though still a young man, her husband was now an invalid, and imbued as she was with heroic ideals, she would not leave his side for the seven days needed to reach her brother and return by palanquin or elephant. Thus on returning to the home of his childhood Barath felt he had none to love. Verily he had sat upon his throne—but found that he had none to love.

He felt a sense of unutterable solitude greater far than that of monarchs upon their thrones, a sense of isolation in which the tenderest cravings of his heart were shut out and stifled, a sense of loss which the gaining of all earth could not compensate: a sense of incompleteness in his life and the want of something that would comfort his human heart. A vague yearning to be loved and to love. . . . Memories of the past awakened to life within him, and he thought even of the leper he had sought to love in childhood. . . . And now he had not even a leper to love. Something rose up like a lump in his throat, something formed like a mist before his eyes. . . .

And then—and then—he heard a faint rustle behind him. He turned at the sound—then paused and gazed.

Within the porch, beneath the arch, there stood a maiden, a wondrously beautiful maiden. Her large black eyes were looking towards him, flashing a moment, yet dimmed the next. Her oval face was of the clearest olive, her lips of the darkest rose.

She was robed in the *chand-tara*, of the softest silk; it clung to her all around, and above its stars and moons there floated the gossamer lines of Dacca's "evening dew." Around her throat were nine rows of pearls; slender Rampur bracelets clasped her wrists, and from

each wrist nine lines of pearls diverged to the bosom, to converge again upon the necklace. Upon her left brow was a forty-rayed star of diamonds, rubies, and pearls, radiating from the rays forty fringes of minute gems down to her eyelashes.

And this wondrous maiden that had come to him like a vision in a dream, stood beside the marble seat of the porch, silent and stately. But a moment after he felt that she was not altogether stately; for there was something soft and clinging in her pose; some deep yearning in her eyes. And never a word did she say. She stood there and gazed at him--and not at him; rather at him a moment, and then at some vision beyond him--some memory perhaps, at once full of joy and full of sorrow.

He also gazed at her in silence, and found not a word to say. Perhaps she was some little peri strayed from Indra's court, and unwittingly found her way to this human abode. Some *little* peri, he thought; for had she been human she would have been deemed but a young maiden. But surely she could not be human? No woman could claim such beauty as this?

Verily, what did he know of women, of his own high-born countrywomen? His mother indeed had been beautiful as a dream; but he had never seen her when she was so young as *this* dream, this vision before him. . . .

And then suddenly, at the thought of all his countrywomen he might have known, the memory came back to him of one who had been to him as a child. The memory came back like a lightning-flash--and he saw and felt and realised that six long years had passed since he was here the last time. With a shock he realised that six long years had indeed passed, the years that had been

to him but six days. His heart leapt back upon the flight of time, and yearned for the day when he was last in this place.

Six years ago he had left behind him a dream, the most beautiful dream of his younger days. And now he had come back, to find that he was awake ; and in the awakening there was a joy more sorrowful than the deepest sorrow, for in that moment he realised that his beautiful dream was indeed ended.

“ My sister—my beautiful sister ! ” The words broke from his lips even as he awoke from the dream. All the love of his young heart since parting from Delini had been given to his little sister—to her who had been to him as a sister.

“ Suvona ! Suvona ! ”—the stifled love of six long years went out in that cry.

But she stood silent and still, as one also in a dream, seeing and not seeing. Her lips were half open, her head was bent slightly forward, as if awaiting an echo—some distant echo that was long in returning.

With one swift motion he was beside her. His arms went round her and enfolded her in his love.

The spell was broken. At the touch of his lips upon her brow the spell was broken. With a strangled cry, a stifled sob, the spell was broken. She nestled in his arms, finding rest—her earthly heaven.

“ It is Fate ! His destined bride ! ” It was the exultant voice of the High Priest that floated in the air from far down the corridor. It failed to reach Barath’s ear, but found an answer in Barath’s heart :—

“ Sister, sister, sister—a thousand times sister ! ”

And then, and then, with her in his arms he sat down upon the marble seat and forgot the world. He snatched

back from Fate six long years, and remembered his boyhood's love. He held her in his arms, and defied Fate to do its worst again—defied the world—defied Time itself. For in that hour he had found his sister.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SECRET OF WESTERN MIGHT

THOUGH Vashista held a triple position, on the day of Barath's arrival he had spoken merely as the spiritual guide. In the succeeding days, however, it was inevitable that his dewanship should be made conspicuous. He had been appointed to that office by Barath's father ; it was now for Barath to adopt the British suggestion—making the dewan merely the chief of his councillors—or to maintain intact the former system.

Vashista personally had never been in favour with the Imperial Government, though indeed the Imperial Government did not intervene in the appointment to any office by the ruler of Barathpur. But now there seemed to be a matter for intervention. On his home-coming Barath received, as he naturally would, the homage of his household. That simple ceremony could have been performed anywhere, though in the throne-room most conveniently in sight of the nation. So, as dewan, Vashista had arranged that in the throne-room that ceremony should be performed. There, however, no other seat was possible—except one for such a visitor as Udai ; hence quite naturally and simply, without any implied significance, Barath had sat upon his throne to receive the homage of his household in sight of his people.

But it was becoming the practice of the Imperial Government to enthrone a new Prince in the presence of the British Resident or Political Agent: to which practice, as implying an added grandeur or ceremony, Vashista did not and could not demur. But to the further implication, arising out of the practice, that the new Prince first sat upon his throne by some sort of British sanction, Vashista strongly demurred, especially where, going one step farther, the British sanction was actually avowed. Hence in arranging that the initial ceremony, simple as it was, should take place in the throne-room Vashista sought to counteract that implication.

It was inevitable, however, that the Imperial Government should ignore the ceremony. It sent a Political Agent to install Barath officially on the throne of his ancestors. The Agent was not only one of the ablest men in the political department of the Imperial Government, but was also actuated by high motives and sentiments, as already manifested in his intercourse with several Princes in the ten years of his present office. His installation speech was in accordance with such sentiments:—

“I may remind Your Highness that since the commencement of its connection with the British Government in 1818, Barathpur has been distinguished by its attitude of goodwill and friendship, and has on all occasions been an ally of the British Government. It has had the Government’s assurance of protection whenever it might have been needed. Beyond that Your Highness can look back on a long line of heroic ancestors whose glorious reigns inspired the bards of Barathpur. In their deeds Your Highness will find

a constant stimulus, and the energy and manliness to do likewise. This day you are publicly assuming a trust they have bequeathed to you. . . . Let me also remind Your Highness that in all official correspondence with each of your predecessors he was addressed as 'friend and ally': I mention that to emphasise particularly this first essential of the relationship between Barathpur and the Imperial Government."

In a land where sentiment is of supreme moment nobler words could not have been used by a Political Agent; and where the sentiment is so high it would not detract from the credit due to the Agent to infer that in part the words were inspired by an Englishman recently sent to India as a Governor, a man who had attained eminence, not through Party influence, but through the great qualities that distinguish Englishmen of the highest type. Hence in using the language prompted in some sense by England directly, the Political Agent could not but express the highest sentiments.

Unfortunately in the actual form of the installation itself he used the language of the Indian Government—and in juxtaposition the contrast was striking:—

"I now assign to Your Highness the task committed to you by the Government. In token that the State is handed over to you and that you are invested with full powers, I now place you on your *gadi*."

"Did you hear that?" Vashista afterwards said to Madhava and Vindara. "He said *gadi*, not *musnud*. High seat, not throne."

"*Gadi* is the term now being used in regard to all rulers," Madhava answered.

"Even a 'friend and ally'!" Vashista said in bitter-

ness. "But did hear further? He said, 'The task committed to you by the Government'; also, 'The State is handed over to you.' As if Barath did not inherit his task by his own house-laws! Did hear that? Barath rules, not because his house-laws made him ruler the very moment his father died, but because the task is committed to him by the British Government!"

"Perhaps the Government does not intend to make that distinction," Vindara suggested.

"But is the distinction explicitly stated in the words 'the task committed to you by the Government'?" Vashista asked.

"I am afraid it is," Vindara answered. "The English language is quite simple."

"Then the distinction is intended—according to English law," Madhava testified. "In several recent prosecutions for sedition in British India the accused pleaded that they did not intend the meaning assigned to their words. But the natural meaning of the words being sufficient for guilt, they were convicted—and rightly. So the argument cuts both ways." This Madhava said in English. Among the three English was used as frequently as Hindi, though Vashista kept to his mother-tongue whenever he could.

"I have no cause to be friendly to the Indian Government," Vindara said after some thought, "but still I think the language of its diplomacy seems stronger than it is meant to be. In the public speeches of Viceroys, Governors, and other high officials there is generally a tone of absolutism, merely because the writers of the speeches—be they the speakers themselves or their secretaries—have unconsciously grown into that mental frame of absolutism in the twenty or thirty years of

their service in India. In contrast note the charming suavity, even the gentle diffidence, in the public utterances of high personages in England. The best remedy would be to employ an Englishman, fresh from England and versed in the language of European diplomacy, to prepare all public utterances in India of high import—and thereby set a better example alike to English officials and Indian journalists. As it so happens, we may expect such a diplomatist in India very soon. I have still a friend in England, though when he last met me it was by stealth. He knows all the inner gossip of London, and has written to me to say that Lord Melnor, a rising politician, is coming to India to study Indian problems. Of course we know that Lord Melnor is a personal friend of His Highness; so we may presume that he will first come to Barathpur.”

Vashista was perturbed. “This news disquiets me. I have a presentiment that his coming will be no remedy, but a further detriment to us. Being a personal friend of Barath, his influence may be great.”

He also perceived that there was an immediate peril. Though the Political Agent never even referred to the incident of Barath’s home-coming and the homage in the throne-room—which was well within the rights of a reigning Prince—he considered the action of Vashista to be a departure from the present practice of the Imperial Government; and though nothing could be said about it because of Barathpur’s treaty rights, the Political Agent deemed the continuance of Vashista in the dewanship to be in some manner detrimental to the interests of the Imperial Government—wherefore, he mentally argued, to the

true interests of Barathpur itself. And Vashista anticipated this mental attitude: he felt that the Political Agent was ranged against him: that when Melnor arrived the combined work of the two would make void the whole scheme of his life. Thus he resolved on instant action.

Without actually revealing to his colleagues in explicit terms his anticipations of Barath's future, he impressed on them the necessity of following his (Vashista's) lead and carrying out his suggestions. His position as High Priest was of the utmost service to him. The dewan's office was situated in the outer palace, in juxtaposition with the other offices; but his dwelling apartments as High Priest were located between the outer and the inner palace. There he invited such of his colleagues to visit him as were imperative to his purpose—for there his character as High Priest was tacitly involved, and he could adopt the tone and attitude of almost parental affection towards men who in years were all young enough to be his children. In a short time he inaugurated such a relationship between himself and his colleagues that even were he to resign the dewanship, or the intrinsic value of that office were to be made void, he could still hope to carry out his purpose through his colleagues indirectly.

The same principle determined his attitude towards Barath. He did not seek to accentuate his dewanship, but rather his position as Barath's *guru* and spiritual guide, his personal friend, when they met of an evening in the inner palace.

Vashista invariably began the conversation with some moral or spiritual subject.

"I have been thinking of thy *mantra*, my son," he said one evening just before Melnor's arrival. "I would beg thee to have it soon."

"Father, wait awhile," Barath answered. "Say six months hence."

"In six months many things may happen that I fear. And meanwhile the presence, and even unconscious influence, of thy English friend, Lord Melnor, might turn thy mind from it."

"Father, it would not. My English friends were always scrupulously careful lest they influenced me in any way in moral and spiritual matters. And even had they sought to do so, they would not have succeeded."

"I did not mean that, my son; I know that thou art firm in thy faith. I meant rather that the revival of English ideas and ideals through Melnor's presence might be incompatible with the complete co-ordination of thy mind with the thoughts essential to the performance of the *mantra*."

"Father, even that thou needest not fear. The English ideas and ideals I have already learnt, but in the *mantra* my thoughts will be such as thou hast taught me."

"Then it is well," Vashista answered joyfully. After a pause he added tentatively, "But thy partner in the *mantra*, whose sanction and co-operation in the ceremony is essential? Wilt find her in the six months, or, perhaps having found her already, wilt choose her within that time?"

Barath shrank from the suggestion of marriage. He hesitated.

"I do not wish to hurry thee," Vashista said gently

"though indeed the *mantra* should not be long delayed. Then in place of thy wife choose her golden image. That will take six months to make."

"So be it," Barath answered.

"It is well!" Vashista cried. "The image will be of thy unknown wife! Think of that, my son! Thou couldst stand before it and make *toposhas* and *novenas*—'To my Unknown Wife' addressing them—and pray Brahma to grant thee one like unto her!"

A sense of joy stole into Barath's heart. What a privilege to see the image of his unknown wife, even for the sake of pouring out the love of his heart to her in solitude!

"Yet more," Vashista continued, reading his thoughts. "The image will be like unto Sita, Rama's wife. I shall see to its making. The old sonar, Madhava's neighbour, has some wonderful artists; I shall choose the best of them to make the image worthily. Think of that, my son—the image of thy unknown wife will be arrayed as a noble princess. There shall be nine rows of pearls around her neck, Rampur bracelets upon her wrists, each wrist sending nine lines of pearls to the necklace; and a forty-rayed star of diamonds, rubies, and pearls upon her brow, radiating forty fringes——"

"Cease, father!" Barath cried in vague apprehension. "Let her be as Brahma pleases, in face and form and array."

"True! Brahma will choose her face, her form, her array—when thou dost find thy unknown wife. Meanwhile for her golden image, which must have some face, some form, some array, let me interpret what might be Brahma's choice."

Then, having gained so far, Vashista passed to material

affairs. Here Barath was on surer ground, for he had the welfare of his subjects at heart rather than his personal happiness. He grew sanguine. Though so far he had had no direct concern with the actual work of administration, the ardour of youth had not been altogether denied. Since his home-coming he had studied all the schemes suggested by the Commission which had been sent to Europe by Vashista.

"I approve of almost all of them," Barath said enthusiastically. "Thy Commission has done a magnificent work, which will be available for use not only in Barathpur, but, I hope, in all India. First and foremost in the matter of agriculture. We shall have irrigation canals to secure the land against drought, and the cultivator will gladly pay for the water. The Commission reports that an irrigation canal should pay a minimum dividend of seven per cent. The Commission also expresses surprise that for British India, where the Government cannot undertake every sort of public work, irrigation companies have not been formed in London with British capital to secure this dividend. Well, in Barathpur the State will undertake the work and gain the dividend. This task, I understand, thou hast already begun as being of the first importance.

"Next, an agricultural bureau with branches in all districts to give free advice on improved methods of cultivation. Then a few industries connected with agriculture, such as the extraction of oils from seeds, for our own use and for exportation to Europe. Afterwards we shall have agricultural banks.

"In regard to cotton-growing we can and will extend the quantity and improve the quality of our cultiva-

tion. The Commission maintains that the whole of the cotton cloth to be used in future in Asia could be supplied by India and Japan by improved methods. At the present moment by far the most important industry in Great Britain is cotton manufacture ; and a great part of this cotton cloth is sold to India—from which a portion of the raw cotton is first imported. In future we shall try to grow better cotton and manufacture the finished article.”

“ True indeed—unless England interferes,” Vashista exclaimed. “ Even now she is interfering with the Bombay cotton mills at the instigation of Lancashire. And remember the past ! Formerly India was the home of the cotton industry—hand-woven of course, but ample in quantity and beautiful in quality. Then India came under British rule—and England started her greatest industry, an artificial industry for which she had no natural advantages, buying the raw material from India and America, and sending back the cotton to India as a finished article. India was her sole rival in the manufacture, but in her power. So she crushed the Indian weaver at the instigation of Lancashire. There was at that time, to give Lancashire a start, an actual boycott of Englishwomen who wore the beautiful Indian muslin in preference to the English article. Dost think England will not move heaven and earth to prevent India from regaining her own, lest perchance the colossal Lancashire industry, artificial as it is, should come tumbling down like a house of cards ? Yes, she knows that her chief source of wealth is a house of cards resting on slumbering India.”

“ All that is past,” Barath answered. “ What was done in the days of the East India Company is impossible

now. Our people shall and must have the right to make their own garments, and England will not now interfere."

"There is good reason for thy confidence," Vashista replied in irony. "For instance, the present excise duty on the Bombay cotton manufacture at the instigation of Lancashire!"

Barath sighed. "All my friends in England told me that they condemned the excise duty, and hoped it would soon be removed; nay, that they would work to that end. Be just, father, be just in all things—even to the British whom thou dost not love. The less thou dost love any one, the greater the reason thou hast to be just to him."

The High Priest bowed his head. "Verily I have said thou art destined to be the teacher of thy teachers."

"I would go farther," Barath continued. "If thy enemy has done a deed, and thou art not sure from what motive out of a thousand possible motives, then assign to him the highest of them all. That is justice."

The High Priest bowed his head. "Yea, thou art the teacher of thy teachers!" But awhile after he added, "If we do that with the English, would they do likewise with us? Even now I read English descriptions of our customs, from the reverence for the cow—the type of the foster-mother whose milk we drink—to our marriage laws, *suttee*, and a thousand-and-one others. And in each case I find the lowest motive assigned to the custom, not the highest. . . . However, we shall not discuss the British. As priest I shall try to be just to them in all things, but as man I shall have to consider existing facts, accomplished facts, unalterable facts. But proceed with our schemes for the welfare of thy people."

Barath's face brightened. The allusions to the British had given him pain. He resumed the suggestions of the Commission with instant enthusiasm.

"I long to see that there shall be no famine in Barathpur, that my people shall not suffer the pangs of hunger. Thus must we increase their resources. Thy foresight has already provided for the greatest of them, iron and coal. The extraction of the coal, begun several years ago, was considerably increased last year by the use of better machinery. The iron-works, a far more difficult task, have only just completed their full equipment : now they will begin to make all things of steel and iron which are the basis of a nation's material prosperity. . . . As for minor industries, all that we can do at present is to open a technical institute to impart a knowledge of the main principles of each. For the practical instructors and demonstrators we have the Japanese experts ; having themselves adopted bodily the whole mass of European experience, they can teach us how to do likewise. Finally, we are issuing an address to our thakurs and zemindars not to let their wealth lie idle, but to bring it out and use it for their own benefit and for the welfare of our people. The report of the Commission reveals the astonishing fact that there are fortunes waiting to be picked up in India, whilst by the same act increasing the welfare of the people ; if that were known in the City of London it might cause a sensation there. Here is a vegetable product growing in abundance everywhere, a part of which we use in our households, but the rest is eaten by wild monkeys : and yet in a liquid form it would make an excellent red wine, of which millions of gallons could be exported to Europe ; in a solid form, with suitable adjuncts, it would make

perhaps the best possible soap for preserving the skin and removing impurities ; and in a condensed form as a pill it would be a simple and wholesome blood purifier. All these qualities have been proved by actual use, and yet there seems to be no capitalist in Europe with imagination enough to start works in India to make the wine, the soap, the pill, export them to Europe—and pocket a few million pounds. And likewise there are a dozen products in India running to waste. Well, we shall keep our knowledge and in due course work these things ourselves. . . .”

Vashista heard in silence. He had won all along the line. Having begun the conversation as Barath's *guru* by referring to the *mantra*, his position as dewan had not been conspicuous. Thus, having prepared the way, he came at last to the daring suggestion upon which everything might yet depend—without which everything might yet be made void.

“My son,” he began tentatively, “any commendation of things of steel and iron from a priest may seem strange, but still I may say that since they are necessary for the good of thy people thou hast done wisely in giving full power to thy able director of these works, Nishi Kashe, for their complete equipment.”

“Yes, father, I perceived the wisdom of it several years ago when I saw Nishi Kashe in London. I then resolved to make even cranes, steam-hammers, bridges, and locomotives ; in fact anything from a needle to the Pillar of Delhi.”

“Aye, the wrought-iron pillar erected by thy noble ancestor sixteen centuries ago when northern Europe was still steeped in barbarism. I have read a recent account comparing it in size to the shaft of a battleship

—which even with modern implements could be made only in half a dozen places in Europe. We have lost that skill in the sixteen centuries, but shall now try to regain it.”

“Even so,” Barath answered. “We shall try to make again the Pillar of Delhi.”

“It is well ! I dream again—I dream again ! . . . Son, remember thy glorious ancestors—Rama, Arjuna, Prithiraj, the very gods of war ! . . . Out of evil shall come forth good : out of the West shall come forth the resurrection of the East ! . . .”

Barath was startled by this sudden ecstasy. Recovering as swiftly, Vashista continued :—

“And there is something else we did in the past better than Europe, which we have now forgotten to do. Son, remember the Malik-i-Maidan, the Lord of the Battlefield, the biggest gun in the world till but yesterday. We made that in India nearly four centuries ago. . . . Verily thou art right ! We shall make again the things we have lost. Son, proceed in haste with the iron-works capable of making all things. Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares—or great big guns.”

“Or cranes and steam-hammers, bridges and locomotives,” Barath answered.

“Even so. Now I must hasten to give my blessings on Nishi Kashe and all his works.”

That night Vashista invited Nishi Kashe and Chandra Sena to his apartments.

“Nishi,” he said to the former, “thou art the son of my oldest friend—peace be to his soul ! Six years ago I sent thee to the West. Since then what hast thou done ? Repeat thy lesson.”

And as if repeating to his father at night all that

he had learnt at school by day, Nishi answered, "For twelve months I learnt in England at Middlesbrough, and twelve months more at the Armstrong works at Newcastle; then twelve months at Pittsburg in America, and twelve months at Krupp's factory at Essen in Germany. There I met some Japanese engineers, and went with them to Osaka in Japan where they were inaugurating their own iron factory. There for six months I learnt all the requirements of a factory capable of making all things of steel and iron, and for six months how to start and complete its erection. Since my return six months ago I have finished the erection of our own works, and shall now begin to make the things they taught me to make in the West."

"And what things of steel and iron did they teach thee to make?" Vashista asked enigmatically.

Nishi answered, as if repeating an old lesson, "Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares."

"It is well! Thy wisdom is as great as thy knowledge. . . . Draw nearer, my son." Nishi drew nearer, and Vashista placed his right hand upon his head. "Nishi, thy father is dead. I am now thy father."

"My father is dead. Thou art my father."

"Thou must obey me in all things."

"In all things," Nishi repeated.

"Say again: what must thou make?"

"Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares."

"It is well!"

Then Vashista turned to Chandra Sena. "And thou the Light of the Army, *senapati*, commander of the forces of Barathpur. I knew thy father well—though I am a priest, and he was the descendant of fourscore warriors. The heroes of old were ever

exhorted by the priesthood to deeds of valour for the protection of their shrines and their household gods. Thus it was I that sent thee to Europe to learn the latest lessons of war. We have had great leaders of battle in the past, Rama, Arjuna, Prithiraj, and later Rajah Maun Singh who conquered for Akbar a third of his empire. Their skill should not be all lost in thee, my son. Elsewhere in Asia we have had Timur and Ghengis Khan: their skill should still be found in Asia. Moreover, thy own ancestor three generations ago was the leader of the fifty thousand warriors of Barathpur originally trained in European methods by the Frenchmen, Court, Allard, and Ventura. Tell me what hast thou done in these years ? ”

“ Before leaving Barathpur I remembered first the lessons of my ancestor,” Chandra answered, “ and read up again in translation the military books the Frenchmen had given us. Then I went to Germany and laboured incessantly for four years.”

“ What didst thou learn there ? ”

“ Chiefly the German system. Also the wisdom of Stein and Hardenberg.”

“ Which is—— ? ”

“ That though a country may be allowed to have only a small standing army, it may yet teach the use of arms to the entire manhood of the country—and thus conquer even a Napoleon.”

“ And then ? ”

“ In Germany I had met some Japanese officers who were finishing their training. I went with them to Japan, and for a year learnt the methods of organisation from actual practice.”

“And what were these things thou didst learn particularly in Japan?”

“Like the Japanese, I saw with my eyes, heard with my ears, and noted in my mind; but my lips have forgotten to speak what I have seen and heard and noted—like the Japanese.”

“Thy wisdom also is great!” Vashista answered in admiration. “But now draw nearer, my son. How many able-bodied men are there in Barathpur?”

“Nearly half a million, mostly the descendants of the fifty thousand trained by the Frenchmen. The old training is not altogether lost in them, but survives by tradition and fitful usage.”

“Aye,” Vashista exclaimed, “I have seen village boys shouldering sticks of bamboos and playing at soldiers. Thou hast good material, Chandra. But still, with all the relic of the old skill, how canst thou manage so many?”

“Besides the assistance of the subordinates who went with me to Europe I shall have the help of a few others. For instance, at first my main duty will be to teach our men gymnastics, just to make them fit. So I shall begin with jiu-jitsu, and have imported several Japanese; they were originally jiu-jitsu trainers for their own army. The first of our men they will teach will in turn impart their knowledge to others, and so on with the rest. Thus in a short time our entire manhood will be efficient—in jiu-jitsu.”

“It is well! . . . But still the actual standing army thou art empowered to keep may need more subordinate instructors than thou hast.”

“I have also obtained a hundred subadars, jemadars,

and other minor officers retired from the British army : Sikhs who served in China, and after retirement found a more lucrative appointment in Manchuria—but were compelled to return owing to pressure at home. Our own Rahtors, who after retiring went to South Africa, and during the late war offered their services, though employed only as stretcher-bearers ; but now that the war is just over they have been ordered to leave the country. Jats and Dogras, Sikhs and Pathans, who were induced to go to British Columbia—but have now been driven back. They all want employment. So I have offered them work in which their military training will not be wasted.”

“ I understand ! ” Vashista answered. “ There is no opening for them in British India, nor in England’s Colonies. For the blood that they have poured out for England from Dongola to Peking they have received blows and fines and imprisonment. But that is just retribution—for serving England. So let them make expiation by serving Barathpur.”

Vashista thought awhile, then looked at Chandra keenly. “ Shall I tell thee more ? Thou must increase the strength of Barathpur. The English are Europeans. Europeans admire most in a State physical power. An Asiatic people like the Japanese, Chinese, or Hindus may send all the works of their arts and philosophies to Europe, but will still be called barbarians—till they succeed in killing a few thousand Europeans in a pitched battle : then indeed will they be deemed civilised. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the hypocrisies of Europe. . . . Is it different in the case of England and the sovereign States of India ? A thousand times no ! Consider the case of Nepaul. The treaty of the British

Government with Nepaul is exactly of the same quality as that with Barathpur and one or two others. Yet Nepaul alone is treated handsomely, and fully in the manner of a friend and ally. Why the distinction? Because Nepaul is strong—which it proves by actually lending a part of its strength, the Gurkhas, to the British army. . . . Yes, my son, thou must make Barathpur very strong—with even some surplus strength. Then if Barathpur is treated, like Nepaul, as a friend and ally, we too could lend our surplus strength to the British as an additional Imperial Service Corps in case of a foreign invasion. But if, on the other hand, Barathpur does not receive its fullest treaty rights—then all the more reason to increase its strength. I have spoken. Dost understand me, my son ? ”

“ Verily,” Chandra answered, bowing his head. But looking up again, he asked quickly, “ Is it for the benefit of my Master ? Assure me of that ! ”

“ Assure thee, my son ? What else am I labouring for ? What else have I lived for ? Dost think life is a pleasure to me, and I do not yearn to be one step nearer to my Nirvana—save for the benefit of Barath ? Yea, save for the benefit of Barath ? ”

“ I am assured. I shall continue my task with zeal. I pray that it be not beyond my power.”

“ Verily thou wilt find the youths of Barathpur ready to learn, aye, youths of all India.”

Forsooth the words of Vashista were full of wisdom. Barath himself had revelled in the smell of gunpowder in childhood. In that he was not unique, nor even exceptional. There are few boys in India who do not revel in the smell of gunpowder, perhaps because they do not have enough of it to nauseate them. And few

who do not love to collect the little powder they can occasionally secure, put it in a small cocoanut shell, fill the empty space with jute, and fire the little bomb with a fuse—just to hear the bang. And few who at fifteen or seventeen or nineteen, having read Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* in English or in a vernacular translation, and fired by the fact that the hero was an Indian Prince, do not yearn to make nitro-glycerine as the castaways in the story did to alter the configuration of their desert island and afterwards to defeat the attacking pirates: in like manner, if they could but make the nitro-glycerine in some school laboratory, there are few Indian boys who would not go to their back garden and use the explosive to alter its configuration, turning mounds into hollows, and hollows into ditches, and demolishing imaginary pirate strongholds.

Thus seeing that the bomb and the nitro-glycerine is there, it needs but political wisdom to determine that they shall be used merely to produce the little bang and the altered shape of ditches in a back garden, rather than for purposes less innocent. We have seen in an earlier chapter how potential loyalty was turned into active sedition. In like manner it were possible to turn the dynamic forces of nature from the hands of boys making ditches into the hands of young men seeking to unmake the seats of the mighty. Then the very existence of the bomb and the nitro-glycerine might come as a stupendous surprise to the political journalists who write about India and superintend the knowledge of England in matters Indian. But they know not even the proclivities of small boys in India.

CHAPTER XXVII

VISWA-MITRA

WITHIN the following month the activity of the palace was increased tenfold. Barath had a chamber fitted as a study, with European furniture, and shelves full of works of reference. The chamber had a door behind Barath's chair leading to the inner palace, and another on the far end communicating with an ante-room; at the side a balcony gave a view of the garden of the palace and led to a corridor adjacent to other apartments. Barath usually worked alone in the study, but the ante-room was generally full of a morning with palace officials awaiting to submit their reports. Beside it was Moolraj's office. He was the first to see his master in the study, before the other officials; but afterwards he often remained in the ante-room, to be as near as possible to Barath. With his duty there was mingled an element of personal affection.

After receiving the palace reports Barath often remained at work in the study; for the ardour of youth would not be denied.

Among those who occasionally came to the ante-room was Ramanand, the assistant chaplain of the palace; his report mainly concerned the domestic occurrences among its thousand-and-one inmates. There was a slight antagonism between him and Moolraj:

not so much because Ramanand had in some sense the spiritual control of the palace, delegated to him by Vashista, and Moolraj the material control, but because Ramanand was suspicious of all European tendencies, whereas Moolraj's blind devotion made him accept as perfect any physical, mental, or moral deed or tendency, or even indication thereof in his master and in his master's friends.

One day, some time after Lord Melnor's arrival, Ramanand returned from his interview shaking his head.

"Well, what news hast thou?" Moolraj asked him lightly. "Thou dost look big with importance."

"News, great news."

"Tell it."

"The English are mad!"

"Is that the news?" Moolraj asked, grinning.

"Listen, and I shall narrate," Ramanand said gravely. "Madness is in the air. It began when this great Englishman came a month ago. He declined the state coach the Master sent him to the Residency, and came in his own evil-smelling carriage. There was no pushing nor pulling, no horses nor coolies, but just a hoot and a toot, a bang and a whizz—and the carriage flew by itself like a mad thing, and did not stop till it reached the palace. Verily it may have been worked by a jinn or a demon of some sort; for we saw a blue vapour surrounding it which emitted a most offensive smell."

"And didst thou see and smell a devil?" Moolraj asked quizzingly.

Ramanand waved his hand to brush aside the levity. "And since then has not the Master been closeted with

this Englishman every day ? I fear he is becoming as mad as he—if I may say so with due respect.”

“ How so ? ” Moolraj asked abruptly. “ How can the Master do aught but right ? ”

“ Right indeed, since he does it ; but strange and revolutionary. Dost know how every visitor has admired the beautiful Gunga Falls ? Now the Master says he is going to make the waterfall do useful work instead of merely looking beautiful. He and the Englishman have decided to make it do the work of fifty thousand horses.”

“ Thou dost dream, my friend. How can a waterfall do the work of horses ? ”

“ I said so ! Does not that sound like madness ? But listen : the waterfall will be made to light this entire city that lies fifty miles away, and at the same time will work the steel factory thirty miles on the other side.”

“ Is that true madness ? ” Moolraj asked in vague doubt, for he had not heard of all this combination before.

“ Assuredly it is. Hast ever heard of steel and light coming from water, and at the same time ? Nay, more. It seems that the water will not be lost at all after making the steel and the light. Instead, after doing the work of fifty thousand horses, it will be caught up in a great big dam and made to irrigate the soil.”

“ There is no madness in *that* ! ” Moolraj exclaimed in triumph. “ It is quite sane to use water for irrigation : as sane as using bread for food.” He laughed at Ramanand’s discomfiture. His momentary doubt had vanished. “ I will tell thee more. As thou knowest, the steel-works were started by Vashista. To use

the waterfall must be merely an extension of the scheme, probably suggested by the Englishman."

"But there is more," Ramanand said resolutely. "All the changes made by Vashista were in material things. But now this English friend of the Master advises him to accept some of the Political Agent's suggestions that affect our social customs, such as the abolition of the customary dowry and the legalisation of widow-marriage. None of these will Vashista accept. There will be a crisis—and we shall see who will win!" With this challenge Ramanand departed.

As foreshadowed, Melnor's coming produced far-reaching results. Hitherto, enthusiastic as he had been, Barath had generally laboured alone, and had seen the Political Agent at the Residency or in the palace only at intervals. But Melnor lived in the palace as Barath's friend, after the preliminary visit to the Political Agent. Thus almost at any hour the two friends could meet.

Realising this, the Political Agent hailed Melnor as an ally.

But what neither he nor Melnor had dreamt of happened through the make of Barath's own mind and heart. Melnor's coming had awakened to life dormant but imperishable memories. For more than two years Barath had parted from England, had then seen the world, and had settled down to labour in his own kingdom. If an eternal impression had not been made upon him, all earth would have had equal power over him or none at all. In that he would not have been unique: there are to-day six young Hindu princes who periodically come to England and resume their English life exactly

where they left off—and then returning to India resume their life there likewise where they left off. Verily Alcibiades was but a modern Hindu. But in the case of the six there has been no imperishable mark of the hand of Fate upon their souls either in the East or in the West : thus perhaps they might betray their Athens to Persia, Persia to Sparta, and both to Athens. Why not ? That would be reparation enough to their country's cause.

Barath was unique because there *was* the eternal impress upon his soul. He had indeed resumed his life in India where he had left off, save for the difference between boyhood and manhood. Then Melnor's coming awakened the memories of his English life — of Kensington and Boscombe. He did not give tongue to his thoughts, his emotions—they were too deep for utterance—nor in any manner confide them to Melnor. Melnor was not the cause of the emotions, but merely associated with their origin. Nevertheless, had he been of a different type—say, of the type of Ellen or Wingate or Thompson—Barath might have even unconsciously revealed to him some few of his deeper feelings. Instead, seeing that Melnor was the brilliant politician—and devoid of the imagination or intuition for divining the inner workings of the human heart—we can realise how Barath buried anew, after the awakening, his deepest memories. It was, however, impossible for him to crush altogether the collateral effects of their resurrection : and the former English influence upon him began to manifest itself. In his mind a perpetual conflict between East and West was now raging, sometimes consciously but far oftener not.

But Melnor began by rendering a great service, alike

to the British Government and to Barathpur. He explained the British attitude clearly and justly.

“The schemes for material progress have come from you and your advisers,” he said to Barath : “they have been welcomed by the British Government. But the suggestions for social and legal reforms, originally made by the Resident in your father’s lifetime and now recommended by the Agent, have been opposed by your advisers—and I venture to hope through a mere misunderstanding which may be removed. A Political Officer is sometimes debarred from explaining himself in terms that may indeed have the advantage of being explicit and unmistakable but also the disadvantage of seemingly suggesting something more than is intended ; but I as a mere friend am not so debarred. Then take it from me that any such British suggestion is purely a friendly advice. Consider two neighbours, one with six sons and six daughters, the other with two sons and two daughters ; and suppose that the former has found suitable husbands for the six daughters and lucrative employments for the six sons : then would it be an impertinence on his part if, even unasked, he were to offer friendly advice to his neighbour how to find husbands for his two daughters and employment for the two sons ? I am told that is being done in India every day. Then take it from me that the British Government’s attitude towards you is exactly that. Such matters, for acceptance or otherwise, are left to your untrammelled and absolute discretion.”

“To be strictly correct, to the discretion also of my proper advisers,” Barath answered. “In fact, primarily the discretion is theirs : afterwards mine—to sanction or to veto. The latter is of rare occurrence.”

“ On that point—again as a friendly suggestion, pray note—the British attitude that something more than the mere sanction or veto should in actual practice rest upon the ruler, is also intended for the benefit of the State. Is there any reason to doubt that? Or even any suspicion? Pray be as candid with me as I am with you.”

“ To be as candid as that I fear I must admit that there is a suspicion in Vashista’s mind.”

“ What, may I ask? ”

“ Thrice have I likewise asked that of Vashista,” Barath answered, “ and thrice has he begged me not to force his lips to say things that would cause him pain to utter and me to hear.”

Melnor thought awhile. “ I am glad that you have at least told me that there is a suspicion. With your permission I shall mention that to the Political Agent. When he sees you again he will probably convince you that the suspicion is groundless. I could only speak as a friend : he will speak officially.”

Thus it came to pass that the crisis mentioned by Ramanand to Moolraj came to a head, and with startling swiftness.

So far Vashista had avoided meeting Melnor, fearing him more than the Agent—whom indeed he had seen officially as dewan. And latterly he had seldom had a conversation with Barath, who was generally in his study with Melnor in office hours, and in the evening going with him in the motor-car to inspect the new works.

Thus Vashista had been in a dilemma. There was now no prospect of Barath’s exclusive company of an evening, as before, when he could lay aside his attitude as dewan

and address him merely as his *guru*. But at last he realised that he must speak privately to Barath, and counteract the Western influences focussed upon him. With that in view he had sometimes sought to visit Barath's study by the corridor and the balcony when Melnor had momentarily departed, but had been compelled to withdraw, once from the very threshold of the balcony, for fear of the Englishman's return.

In this frame of mind he learnt of the visit of the Political Agent on some special business, a few days after Melnor's foregoing conversation with Barath. This was the hour of battle. . . .

Melnor withdrew from the study, leaving Barath with the Agent; for his presence as a personal friend might have seemed to be in the nature of an undue influence. He had done enough by preparing the way.

"Your Highness will no doubt understand," the Political Agent said to Barath, "that in suggesting your active participation in the administration of the State the Imperial Government is seeking precisely the conditions Your Highness inwardly desires, and is actually fulfilling outwardly for the welfare of your subjects: nay, the very conditions initiated by Your Highness's advisers. In actively supervising and carrying out the material reforms inaugurated by those advisers Your Highness is doing precisely what is implied in the suggestion of the Imperial Government: in fact, were Your Highness admittedly the actual practical ruler you could not be doing more than you are doing now. In fine, the suggestion of the Imperial Government is now an accomplished fact, by and with the consent of Your Highness's advisers and your own active and magnificent co-operation."

This was an argument as unimpeachable as unforeseen. It found Barath without a reply.

"And admittedly," the Political Agent continued, "Your Highness's labour as the actual practical ruler has been beneficial. Then would the benefit be made void by doing Your Highness justice and openly acknowledging you as the actual practical ruler? That is precisely the Imperial standpoint."

Again Barath found no answer.

"Then accepting the accomplished fact, let us consider the future attitude of the Imperial Government. Your Highness has always had the power of veto or sanction. Add to that, not the power of initiation which you have always possessed theoretically, but merely the practice of initiation—whenever Your Highness's discretion should so suggest. That is all that is implied. And the special advantage of your initiation, as supplementary to that of your advisers, would lie in the fact that Your Highness's special training in Europe has perhaps given you a vision wider than that of your advisers. The Imperial suggestion merely implies the practical use of Your Highness's exceptional knowledge for the welfare of your subjects. Is there any cause for suspicion in that?"

Once again there was no answer—save the sighing of the wind through the corridor, and the rustling of the curtain in the balcony.

"As for the advisers, their individual position remains exactly where it was before. Likewise their power of initiation, by suggestions to Your Highness."

"Except the position of the dewan," Barath answered. "If you will permit me to make a comparison with due deference, I think that his present

position in Barathpur is akin to that of the British Prime Minister, who with the aid of his Cabinet actually governs Great Britain. Your suggestion would place him in the position of the British Prime Minister before the days of Walpole."

The Political Agent was not quite pleased at the comparison, though he could not deny its justice. . .

"Even granting that," he replied, "if the total result is for the welfare of Your Highness's subjects, I venture to submit that the position of an individual minister should not bar the way. In the present instance, I understand, the dewan is opposed to the reform."

"Vashista has been opposed to it since my father's reign."

"Then it seems to me that the opposition may have been reasonable so far, and even justified by the actual work he has done: but I fear that any continuation of it now would imply a personal ambition; even Bismarck was not above it. I understand that the dewan entertains a suspicion regarding the motives of the Imperial Government which he does not venture to specify, though he is not above revealing its existence. The Imperial Government may reply by maintaining that the continued opposition of the dewan likewise justifies a suspicion which it does venture to specify—that the opposition can only be prompted by a personal ambition."

The curtain at the balcony parted, and the tall, gaunt figure of Vashista entered the room. He was stung to the quick.

"Whatever I may now say," he spoke in English in a level voice, "may not alter the decision His High-

ness has come to with the advice and at the suggestion of the Imperial Government. But ambition, sir, personal ambition? Sir, I am too old for that. I have lived my life, and am past all personal thought or care."

Vashista looked at Barath, and added, "If thy enemy has done a deed, and thou art not sure from what motive out of a thousand possible motives, then assign to him the highest of them all."

And Barath found no answer to his own teaching.

Then Vashista turned to the Political Agent and continued, "But suspicion, sir? The suspicion you mentioned that I entertained but dared not specify? Would you have me specify it now?"

"If you desire to. The Imperial Government seeks to know even the causeless suspicions of its opponents."

"Would you have me be quite candid?"

"The Imperial Government would."

"Then, sir, have it!" Vashista cried in bitterness. "Do you remember what you did with Udaipur? Then let me remind you. As with Barathpur so also with Udaipur the original treaty of the East India Company decreed that, 'There shall be perpetual friendship, alliance and unity of interest between the high contracting parties from generation to generation, and that British jurisdiction shall never be introduced into any part of Udaipur.' But in 1866, after a minority, when the young ruler had just come of age (eighteen), the Imperial Government made a new treaty with him by which he ceded legal jurisdiction over certain territories of his. And this young man died in 1874, so that there was again a minority till 1879, when the new ruler came of age. Then you made a new treaty

with him also, by which he gave up a portion of his revenue, and allowed British salt, a Government monopoly, to be introduced into his territories without a tax. Treaties with boys of eighteen to their detriment do arouse a suspicion that could have been avoided by waiting a few years till the boys were older—and the Imperial Government should be like Cæsar's wife. That was the cause of my suspicion. As for your suggestion to make the ruler of Barathpur a practical ruler who does the actual work of administration—even to the extent of making new treaties—my opposition was prompted by the desire to ensure that no treaty could ever be made with a boy-ruler of eighteen, but with a dewan of fifty-eight or seventy-eight. Pray convey that to the Imperial Government."

"I shall!" the Political Agent answered quickly. "The Imperial Government will be interested to know the mental attitude towards it of the dewan of Barathpur!"

"And yet you said just now that the Imperial Government desires to know even the causeless suspicions of its opponents," Vashista replied in sarcasm. "Causeless suspicions undoubtedly furnish an easy triumph by their speedy vanquishment—but not suspicions that are justified!" He paused a moment to give time to the shot to rankle. "But lest the candid opinion of the dewan of Barathpur should cause embarrassment, as you imply, between His Highness and the Imperial Government, I now resign the dewanship."

Thus at a single blow the work of a life-time was made void. The iron will that had sustained Vashista

since the moment of Barath's birth, the years of foresight, of concentrated purpose, of strenuous labour, of heroic fortitude and self-denial and self-immolation, were made void at the bidding of a stranger. . . .

And yet such a man could be the most dangerous in the hour of defeat, saying, "Dessaix, we have lost one battle—let us win another"—and winning his Austerlitz.

"Let me give you my last message," Vashista said to the Political Agent. "Pray tell the Imperial Government from me that so far it has succeeded in making only seditionists or sycophants of our public men: its opponents seditionists, its supporters sycophants. When there is an outburst of disloyalty, and the Viceroy or a Governor arises in the Council and cries out for our public men to come forth and support the Government, see that they do not fear to speak, or speak but to praise the Government. Instead devise some scheme to create public men who will fearlessly speak their inmost thoughts, though the heavens should fall. I have spoken."

With these words as the last of his dewanship, Vashista departed.

An hour later he sent a message to Nishi Kashe through Ramanand:—

"Thy Master has need of the pins and needles. Hasten on!"

Another to Chandra Sena:—

"I said it was to thy Master's interest. So hasten on with the jiu-jitsu, and the lessons of Stein and Hardenberg!"

The news of Vashista's fall spread through the city and

ERRATUM

Page 406, line 8:

for "Austerlitz" *read* "Marengo and his Austerlitz."

the country around with the quickness of communication of public events found only in India.

“The dewan has fallen! The dewan has fallen!” The cry passed from the multitude and swelled through the streets; for the power of Vashista had been known and felt. Doubting men hurried at the rumour to the palace gate. There a dense throng had instantly gathered to hear confirmation of the tidings.

“Is it true?” they asked of one another.

“Verily it is true,” the Scribe cried aloud. “The dewan has fallen!”

A voice answered him from the palace gate: “Aye, but not the High Priest!”

It was Ramanand that had spoken, the assistant priest to Vashista. The multitude looked at his face to read his words.

“The dewan is vanquished: the High Priest shall triumph!” Ramanand sent forth the challenge—and the multitude understood.

“Great is Vashista!” they whispered. “And he will prevail!” Though in what thing Vashista was to prevail and in what manner they knew not yet, nor cared. . . .

That night Vindara, Madhava, and the young men in office came to Vashista’s apartments to show their sympathy. They did not share the vague hopefulness of Ramanand and the multitude. Instead they were filled with the generous indignation of youth; for they knew that Vashista had given twenty-five years of his life to Barathpur. They were not concerned about his personal interests, for they knew he had none, but rather about the prospect of his plans.

“Three more steps like this,” Madhava cried in

bitterness, "and Barathpur shall be a vassal State, not a friend and ally. Of course we shall know it when it is an accomplished fact ! "

"Then let us know it now," Vindara replied. "I should say only one more step was needed. The thin end of the wedge was applied at the British enthronement of His Highness. This is the insertion. The next will be the cleavage."

"Not yet ! " Vashista said in sudden resolve, looking keenly at Madhava. "The dewan is dead, but his right hand lives ! Thou art the right hand. Dost understand me, my son ? "

Madhava silently bowed his head.

"Do not trust the English," Vashista added.

"I have no cause to," Madhava replied.

"Aye ! Remember Jhansi ! "

Then the door behind opened gently, and an aged form entered the room. The face was thin and parched and emaciated ; the eyes sunken deep and almost sightless ; the body bent with age and privations, and unsustained by an indomitable will like that of Vashista. The old man stretched a withered hand to feel his way, holding a supporting staff with the other. But with his last words of challenge undried upon his lips Vashista turned and guided the venerable form to a seat, saying, "Brother, my words were not in anger but in justice." This he said as if to excuse himself.

And the young men arose and silently bowed to Viswa-mitra.

"My children," the old man said to the youths, "do not rage. Life is too short. There is no room for rage, but for love. Love even the English."

Turning to Vashista, he said in hope, "Brother, do not

fear. The Child has grown in wisdom as in years. He will fulfil his mission."

Then lest he had presumed too much in speaking thus to the High Priest of Vishnu, Viswa-mitra humbled himself. "Brother, thou didst teach me once the beginning of wisdom and of all things. Read to us again the beginning of all things."

Vashista brought out the book and read anew the words of twenty-five years ago : the building up of the earth, the birth of Krishna, and the promise of the New Krishna.

Thus finding enlightenment, Vashista said, "Yea, the Child shall fulfil his mission. Let us now prepare him for his confirmation in his mission."

CHAPTER XXVIII

KAMONA'S LAST HOPE

ON the fall of the dewan Madhava went home for the first time after many months. Latterly he had dwelt in his official apartments in the outer palace so as to be near his business. He had felt a sense of responsibility greater than what was implied in his vakilship, for he shared in the task of departments other than his own, not in matters of mere routine, but in the far more important consideration of their general organisation.

Being but human, in devoting himself entirely to affairs of State he had neglected his household duties and his personal responsibilities. In that he felt he had been culpable ; totally negligent in the past few months, and comparatively in the last few years : for even from the first inauguration of the schemes suggested by the Commission, he had been absent from his own house except at long intervals. He now returned to it for a brief moment—in some trepidation. In a vague fear that he had failed in something in regard to his personal obligations. And with that perception there was also an indefinable apprehension that his personal failure might have contributed to the creation of perils unsuspected before, but now to be made manifest. Perils not only to his happiness—such little of it as was still possible to him—but also to his moral rectitude. He

was no saint ; but still he was not the man to receive a gift in the fullest measure without giving all he could in return—and if debarred from so repaying to the uttermost, without a sense of moral failure.

He would make restitution, such little as he could. In the midnight hour he stole from his house. He crossed the boundary between his garden and the neighbouring one, and hesitated. On the rare occasions he had gone there formerly he had passed beyond the fountain on the far side and had awaited by the sheltered seat : awaited the invitation. For, going with empty hands morally, he had nothing to give in return, and had to wait for anything that was offered him voluntarily. Not that the gift had not been always bestowed on him willingly, lovingly, but that he had felt he could not ask for it.

Now he hesitated by the boundary, because of the many months of his total absence : he felt he might have forfeited even the privilege of waiting for the free and loving gift—and nevertheless to resume his place by the seat would be but asking for the gift avowedly. In that mental frame he chose rather to go the other way—towards the “ public ” side of the garden-house, now indeed closed to the public for some years and unoccupied. In the garden there he would review his position—for there he would place himself on the same level as a hundred others gone before him, claiming no privilege.

In his mental preoccupation his sensory faculties were partly at rest ; external things apparently unconnected with the objects of his thoughts he might casually see or hear, without paying the slightest heed to them ; only a persistent impression could awake his full perception. It was his faculty of hearing that aroused

him. For some little time he had vaguely heard a sound that might have been a footfall outside the garden wall, but had taken no heed ; and awhile after the rustling of leaves on a tree adjacent to the wall ; still he had been absorbed in his thoughts. But when suddenly a bough of the tree shook violently and bent to the wall, he awoke. Standing quite still where he was, he watched the bough critically. It was held by a rope thrown upon it from beyond the wall. A moment later a head appeared, followed by the whole body. The man glanced round, let himself down into the garden by the rope, crossed swiftly the ten yards of open space, and entered the front of the house by a low balcony.

A thousand conflicting thoughts were now battling in Madhava's mind : a thousand doubts, a thousand apprehensions—aye, a thousand jealousies. Who was the intruder, and why was he there ? . . . But was he an intruder—or had he come by some species of right, if not privilege, as good as his own ? He was himself no better than an intruder ! . . . Yes, he was ! He had at least remained below by the seat before the pool, awaiting an invitation—whereas this man had entered boldly, as if sure of a welcome. . . . Then a saving thought came to Madhava : perchance the man had likewise waited below for the invitation on other occasions, in vain : and now grown desperate, had trespassed into the house.

Then suddenly Madhava remembered that there was no internal communication between the front and the back of the house. So a few minutes later the baffled intruder reappeared, came down to the garden and reconnoitred. It was useless going by the pool on the

far side, as there only a voluntary admittance would have availed. The stranger came round to the side adjacent to Madhava's garden, crossed the boundary, and espied the convenient mango-tree.

The long branch bent with his weight. With eyes intent upon the window opposite, he failed to notice anything below. The method of plucking mangoes from the top branches is by a long bamboo having a strong hook attached to the end ; and every gardener keeps such a contrivance at hand. Even as the intruder was measuring the distance to the window with an arm outstretched, the bamboo shot up from below, and the hook gripped his ankle. There was a swift jerk, and with a cry of terror the man came tumbling down ten feet to the ground below.

"Prem Singh, by all that is devilish !" Madhava looked at the prostrate man ; his lips curled in scorn. "Thou hast dishonoured thy grandsire's aged locks. What would Jaswan Singh, thakur of Barathpur, say if he learnt that his brattling had been caught in my garden at night seeking to violate the privacy of my neighbour's house ? To spare him that shame I have a mind to run my sword through thy heart—save that it is still untarnished by contaminated blood."

He paused to give time to the words to rankle, then continued :—

"Barathpur has no need of men like thee, nor India : but thy death by itself would sully the soil of India. Thus await the death of some honourable relative, mount his funeral pyre, plunge thy sword into thy heart at his feet, and be consumed in his flames. Thus alone shalt thou escape eternal infamy. Now go !"

Prem Singh arose and walked out into the night.

And Madhava that was no saint stood beneath the mango-tree, wrapt in thought. . . .

"Enter, my lord, enter!" He heard the whispered words, and raised his head. Kamona's window was now open. Hearing Prem Singh's falling cry and the sound of words, she had been awakened from sleep. Sleep after months of weary waiting.

"It is thy house," Madhava said simply.

Verily the saint and the sinner jostle each other in the same man. Madhava now felt qualms of conscience. It had dawned upon him suddenly how little difference there was between him and Prem Singh.

"It is thy house I said—and I have no right to enter."

"And thine," Kamona answered. "The house is my dowry."

Madhava laughed bitterly. "Before the wedding?"

"The wedding has gone before."

"Not in the knowledge of the world. Dost still trust me, Kamona? How dost thou know I shall not turn miscreant, and deny thee? I may be sorely tempted!"

"Not my lord. He is noble."

Kamona's unflinching faith conquered. Verily, the word of the high-born is better than his bond. And even a conscious miscreant might be shaken from his purpose by a woman's trusting love. And Madhava that was no saint was no miscreant.

He bowed his head, and entered. . . .

Afterwards they made plans; and Kamona was the more hopeful of the two. She knew that he was seeking to legalise widow-marriage in Barathpur.

"And if thou dost fail to do that, we can still go

to dwell in British territory where such a marriage is legal. I have enough and to spare for both of us." Then suddenly aware of the implied vaunt, she added, "If my lord would but use it his handmaid would be comforted."

It was upon Madhava's tongue to utter the anger of his heart; but it is not possible for mortal man of flesh and blood to rage whilst the woman's lips are still upon his lips, her arms around his neck—whilst yet their hearts have not ceased the quickened beat of their mingled love. Madhava answered her gently—

"Kamona, I shall never dwell in British territory. I shall never be thy pensioner. Lastly, I have duties to fulfil in Barathpur, especially now."

"Then there remains but one hope. Thou must gain over Vashista."

"To induce Vashista to sanction widow-marriage would be a miracle," Madhava answered.

"Why? Thou hast sincerely and from conviction supported him in all other things——"

"Without personal interest. So in this matter I can use no persuasion or argument with him."

"Then leave him to me!"

"Thou, Kamona?" Madhava asked, smiling incredulously. "What magic dost thou possess?"

"Nothing, my lord, save a trifling service I may yet do him. He has sent word that on the morrow he will come to see my father's best artist in the matter of a golden image, and has sent me a message that he will see me privately afterwards."

"So be it, Kamona. Try thy best. If thou dost fail, I see no other hope."

Then his heart was sunk in despondence. And

gradually a rebellion arose within him, and the old, old anger.

"Kamona, methinks I shall never forgive thee for not having married me from the first. Dost think I am not weary of coming to thee like a thief in the night? Aye, shall I say it? Dost think I do not yearn for fatherhood?"

At that word she started, and a terror swept over her heart.

"The mercy of Durga has spared us that," she faltered.

On the following day Kamona was in a state of nervous excitement. It could only be a purpose of exceptional importance that would bring the High Priest to her house. She was bidden to hear from behind a curtain his preliminary directions to the artist. A golden image of a woman was to be made, life-size and of human weight. To render the combination possible the image should be hollow, yet with sufficient thickness to be substantial. That was all that was said to the artist.

Afterwards Vashista saw Kamona privately to complete the instructions.

"Hast any skill in thee?" he asked her.

"I have the blood of fourscore sonars in me," she answered. "And I have watched from childhood my father's artists at work."

"Dost feel thou couldst touch up a face to make it life-like?"

"I could try. If the resemblance is not obtained at the first attempt, I could try again."

"It is well," Vashista answered. His attitude grew

less businesslike and more friendly. "If thou couldst do that for the face, it should be much easier to touch up or merely direct the artist's work in regard to the robes and jewels. For the body must be so chiselled as to make it appear to be robed in cloth-of-gold. As for the jewels, real ones must be used and attached to the image in a life-like manner. Nine rows of pearls around her neck, Rampur bracelets upon her wrists, each wrist sending nine lines of pearls to the necklace; and a forty-rayed star of diamonds, rubies, and pearls upon her brow, radiating forty fringes down to the eyelashes."

Kamona started. "Only a Princess would wear all that!" she cried in wonder. And there was only one in Barathpur.

"Thou hast said it!" Vashista answered, with a smile. "Kamona, can I trust thee?"

She bowed silently.

"It is well—and thou shalt not lose by it," he replied. "See that none but the artist and thou behold the completion of the image. Yes, it must be that of a Princess. It is intended for the coming *mantra* of a Prince, in lieu of a living wife. Dost understand me?"

She silently bowed, wondering inwardly.

Vashista looked at her face. "Thou art beautiful," he said in friendly comment, which was permissible in one of his age and position. "Thy complexion is about perfect and will serve as guidance, for the olive skin of a beautiful sonar woman is not inferior to that of a Princess: so mix a little silver with the gold for the face. And the contour of thy face is likewise beautiful, but I need one more oval and less

rounded than thine. In that thou shalt have to work from life. Thou must see a Princess—even so as by doing her service. The artist, being a man, may not see a Princess unveiled; but thou, a woman, canst. Dost understand me?”

“But how can I, a widow, do service to a Princess? My service may be inauspicious, perhaps a curse.”

“If thy service bears good fruit, as I foresee, it may remove the curse from thy widowhood.”

A mingled fear and hope was knocking at her heart. “Father, do I understand thee? Can my service be of such importance?”

“Of such importance that it may help to make the destinies of a Prince and of a Princess. If it be as I foresee, thou shalt have thy reward.”

“And that is?” she asked, catching her breath.

“I shall absolve thee from the pains and penalties of widowhood.”

A shriek of joy rose up to Kamona’s lips that she could not altogether stifle. “Father, I take thee at thy word!”

Meanwhile Barath was in mental tribulation. The very conditions predicted by Vashista were now being fulfilled: and when Barath had told the High Priest that the coming of Melnor would not affect the preparation for the *mantra*, he had not realised the intensity of the impressions he had received in England. Melnor’s continued residence in the palace gave rise to English reminiscences by a word here, a phrase there, or the mention of a name known to them both—above all by the simple and trivial fact that Melnor’s letters from home were now addressed to him at the palace. For a dozen occasions spontaneously arose to lead Melnor to

convey news to Barath, trivial in themselves, which nevertheless aroused within him a thousand associations. In his mind he re-enacted the scenes of the past—with his head upon his pillow, the one moment he could spare for thoughts of self after the day's work for his people.

And then the immediate proximity of the *mantra* dawned upon him somewhat in the nature of a shock—not in regard to its purely religious aspect, but in regard to his future marriage implied by the golden image. Moreover, the image would have to be made in some shape or form—worthy to represent his future wife, as Vashista had told him; wherefore by sheer association of ideas the image would suggest some actual woman, perhaps idealised, yet in some manner akin. From that Barath shrank.

An idealist may dream of his future wife, weaving pictures of her in his mind, endowing her with a thousand charms; for ten long years he may hug himself to sleep each night with the hope of meeting her among the daughters of men. Barath could do that: but he would have deemed it a sacrilege to take a single attribute from a woman of his acquaintance and endow with it his unknown wife; for then it would have seemed to him that in part he had appropriated that woman for his wife. He had met a few women of the noblest attributes, and had he been any other man but himself, albeit still an idealist, he would have fashioned a composite creature from all of them—the beauty of one, the heart of another, the intellect of another, and the voice, the gesture, the smile, the glance, and the waving hair from all else. To Barath that was impossible. In his inmost heart he crushed every rising thought of any

woman he knew as his possible wife—because he still awaited a definite pronouncement of Fate and revelation of her who was destined for him.

But now the very making of the golden image would imply a definition of some kind. The High Priest would see that the image would be a worthy representation : then in some manner the definition would be in part Vashista's, and Barath's ideals would be amended by Vashista.

With that thought Barath resolved that one little token of his should be embodied among those external signs selected by Vashista as necessary for her that was to be his wife. Fate might find her, and the High Priest sanction her, but something rose up in Barath's heart and bade him supply one little token of his own heart-choice.

He sent for Madhava.

"What is the estimate for the image?" he asked Madhava.

"Four thousand *mohurs* for the metal, or six thousand six hundred English sovereigns; the treasury has already paid the gold."

"Then refund the treasury from my personal account."

"And ten thousand *mohurs* to come for the jewels, if they have to be made."

"They need not be made," Barath answered. "The heirlooms of our house will suffice. I understand that the sonar will send some one to choose from them."

For Vashista had arranged that Kamona should have frequent access to the inner palace.

"Madhava, I have something to say to thee. Thou art the sonar's neighbour, and may have to go to thy house often. Wilt do me a personal service?"

Madhava silently salaamed, wondering inwardly. The last few days, since his encounter with Prem Singh and subsequent visit to Kamona, he had returned to his house each night from the palace.

“I thank thee, Madhava. It were easier for the artist to be guided by thee than by me. Direct him to come to thee at thy leisure, or communicate with him as thou pleasest. The High Priest will see that the image is made suitable for the *mantra* ; so the robes and the jewels may be as he directs, and the face as the artist is inspired to shape. But I desire that the hands shall not be empty, and shall hold a gift. I shall entrust thee with a box containing something which the artist must copy in gold and place in the hands of the image. It is just a fancy of mine : but do me this service.”

And taking the sandal-wood box, Madhava departed, wondering still more.

CHAPTER XXIX

BARATH'S MANTRA

FOUR months later the image was completed. It was brought to the palace and placed in Barath's private oratory, adjacent to his study. In the gold the face was exposed, but as the image had to stand for his wife a long silken veil was placed over it. None so far had beheld the completed image, save the artist and Kamona.

Meanwhile, for the last nine days, Barath resigned all affairs of state and retired into seclusion and contemplation. The ceremony had the deepest significance. Primarily a confirmation in faith, it was also a partial ordination; for the head of a Hindu household had to perform minor sacerdotal rites in the bosom of his family. It was likewise an initiation into the most secret mysteries of Brahminism. Each mystery implied a particular attribute of the Godhead, and was symbolised by a single word, which, expanded, contained the sum-total of human knowledge of that attribute. Also other mysteries implying the relationship between the Creator and the creature, and its earthly image—the tie between parent and child. All these Barath prepared to receive.

With the innate delicacy of an English gentleman—however much he may be in error in his grasp of inner Indian politics—Melnor departed from Barathpur and

went on tour in British India, just to leave Barath untrammelled by even a suggestion of Western associations in so supreme a moment.

On the night of the vigil the High Priest of Vishnu came to Barath robed in the *namaboli*,—"the names of the Deity,"—a long cope inscribed with the thousand names of the Godhead denoting the thousand omnipotent attributes. In that moment Vashista had to sink his personality and be but the exponent of his faith, and to Barath his preceptor. And Barath likewise had to forget his princehood and all that it implied, and all other things of self besides, and be but the neophyte.

Yet in the minds of both there was a latent consciousness that each stood to the other in a still higher light. Vashista dimly realised that the *mantra* would be a confirmation of Barath's destiny no less than of his faith, wherefore in some manner the confirmation of his own mission in life: thus Barath's *mantra* would be a part of Vashista's karma. Likewise Barath felt that to him Vashista was something more than the preceptor: that the initiation into the mysteries might alter the very basis of his moral perception and affect the well-springs of his existing emotions. In that a vague fear surged over him. No man of flesh and blood can with equanimity contemplate even the possibility of having to resign his deepest, wherefore silent, predilections: and so far Barath felt himself to be no more than a man of flesh and blood.

The preceptor and the neophyte met in the oratory, facing the veiled image. None other was present, as none other could be.

"Is thy election voluntary?" the preceptor catechised

the neophyte. "Dost seek the *mantra*, not from human dictation or persuasion, but of thy own ardent faith ? "

"Of my own ardent faith, seeking but to strengthen it."

"Hast no curiosity to learn the mysteries ? "

"None. For they may be learnt in pain." This Barath added out of his own perception. Instantly a dim memory rose up within him of having used similar words before with Francis Thompson, but he crushed the memory lest it distracted him—and by associations with the noblest of the West disquieted him.

"Art pure in body and in mind ? Hast spent thy days and nights in prayer and fasting, and hast stifled the promptings of the flesh ? Yea, hast seared the stings of the flesh and the desires of the heart even so as with red-hot irons ? "

The neophyte bowed his head. 'Even so as with red-hot irons.'

"Art at peace with the world ? Hast one small hate in thy heart ? "

"Not hate, but love," Barath answered, with quivering lips.

"It is well ! Is thy conscience free and unburdened, as of a babe ? "

O Barath, my Master, pause ere thou dost answer before the image of thy unknown bride ! What was the motive of thy gift ? Was it but the restoration of one thou didst receive ? Then it is well ! Was it prompted by the consciousness that in unwittingly receiving the gift thou didst incur an obligation thou canst reveal to no man, awaiting the pronouncement of Fate—nevertheless an obligation that binds thee irrevocably to the

image of thy unknown bride ? In fulfilling that obligation to the image didst thou but fulfil the command of thy inmost conscience ? Then indeed it is well ! . . .

Thus again the neophyte bowed his head in acquiescence.

“ Lastly, hast faith in thy preceptor, that out of the fulness of his spiritual knowledge he can impart to thee the mysteries ? ”

“ Out of his spiritual knowledge—yea, out of the direct revelation and inspiration accorded him,” the neophyte answered in humility. He himself had been accorded moments of inspiration and had seen world-truths : perchance the High Priest of Vishnu had likewise, and in a higher order.

And thou, O Vashista, why this strange exaltation in thy heart in receiving the neophyte's assent ? Is it because thou dost believe in thy inmost heart that thy conception of Barath's highest destiny is based upon just such a direct revelation—of twenty-five years ago ? Out of Barath's mouth shalt thou prove his destiny, in the fulness of time ? Then it is well ! Now pass to thy vigil also ! . . .

Vashista spent the night in silent prayer ; for indeed this was his vigil also.

At early dawn he conferred the mysteries.

“ Art ready ? ”

The neophyte sank upon his face.

“ *Om ! Om ! Om !* Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva ! ” the preceptor chanted, thrice for the Trinity.

“ *Nama stri-murtayé*, we salute thee O thou who art three-in-one !

“ *Srishti-prak kebal-atmané !*

“ *Srishti-sthiti prala-yagé !*

“ Before creation thou art, thou alone, O undivided Soul !

“ For creation thou art the Trinity, thou alone !

“ *Paschaat ! Bhedam ! Upejushé !*

“ Creation, preservation, regeneration are all in thee, in thee O Trinity : yea, in thee ! ”

Vashista paused awhile in silent meditation.

“ This, this in truth, is the great mystery !

“ *Twyam adi-deba, purushas puranas !*

“ *Twyam asya bishwasya, param nidhanam !*

“ Thou, O Trinity, art the first cause and the last, the beginning and the end of all things, from the well-springs (of the Ganges) unto the ocean !

“ *Bittasi bidyamché paramché dhama !*

“ *Twaya tatam biswa-mananta rupa !*

“ The source of all knowledge, thou art the object of all knowledge, and the final rest and comfort !

“ Pervading the universe, all things make thee manifest and proclaim thee Creator !

“ *Apabitra pabitra ba*

“ *Sarba-bastham gatopiba !*

“ *Ja sharet pundarika-ksham sa*

“ *Badhya bhyantaro suchis !*

“ Holy of holies, the unholy are made pure in thee, in thee, O Lotus-Eyed !

“ Thou alone art pure, thou alone art holy, thou alone art love, O Lotus-Eyed ! ”

Thus the thousand omnipotent attributes the preceptor named. And the neophyte lay prostrate upon his face, hearing and not hearing ; for in the contemplation of the attributes there was *yoga*. Hearing the preceptor intoning the majestic Sanskrit verse, the soul of the neophyte vibrated with a thousand emotions—

and passed to the *yoga*, the perception of the divine Essence that was also oblivion : oblivion of the earth.

Thus the preceptor took the neophyte through all the mysteries—which none may know save the elect, and even they may never reveal. . . .

The preceptor stooped and breathed thrice into the neophyte's ear.

"Receive the gift of understanding!"

Thrice again. "*Hring Shaukti!* Learn the secret of Force . . . the divine power, controlling the universe! In thy heart, the force of will!"

And thrice again he emptied his breath into the neophyte's ear. "*Kling Krishna!* Learn the mystery of love . . . the love that regenerated mankind . . . that in emblem binds man to woman!"

"Sleeper, awake!"

The neophyte awoke from his *yoga*.

"Arise!"

Barath arose and stood before the golden image.

"Unveil thy bride!" Vashista whispered to him.

"This is thy mystic nuptial!"

As one in a dream Barath parted the silk drapery before the image. In that moment there was an unvoiced exultation in Vashista's heart and a vague yearning of love in Barath's.

Then as the image was unveiled, they both started. With exultation Vashista saw and noted the face. Then his eyes wandered down to the hands, and he noticed a garland of strange flowers held in the hands—and in that he was perturbed, for he knew not its significance. In like manner Barath had eyes for the garland first, his heart leaping anew within him. Then, looking up, he saw the face and the jewels of a

princess, jewels and tokens he had seen before in life itself. Thus he too started in wonder and in perturbation.

For the face indeed was the face of Suvona, but the garland was the garland of Nora.

Then hope came back to each. To Vashista the face was paramount, the unknown garland but an accessory: the face alone might conquer. To Barath the garland was the true emblem of his nuptial, the sign eternal; the face but the work of man. Thus each hoped.

"Behold thy destined bride!" Vashista said, gazing at the face.

"My destined bride," Barath answered, looking at the garland.

"Contemplate!" the preceptor gave his last injunction, and departed. For the last emblem of the *mantra* "*Kling Krishna*," had been an emblem of love—love divine and love human. Well might the neophyte meditate upon it before the image of his unknown bride. . . .

But, O my Master, why art thou silent? Vashista has gone, and thou art alone with thy bride. Then pour out thy heart in love! Be not a traitor to thy love. Hast learnt reticence in love in the West, and for five long years hast denied it to thy lips? Then let me remind thee that in the West love has to wear a cloak and a mask, wherefore, coming in such guise, it may be traitorous love; but in the East love may go forth unveiled and arrayed in fine raiment. Then pour out thy heart, my Master, pour out thy heart in love! . . .

A thousand emotions surging within him, Barath's quivering lips could find no utterance. He stood silent

and still, gazing at the image : yet the gaze seemed distant, as if by the aid of the image he really beheld something beyond it. Then the object upon which he gazed in imagination seemed to take some definite shape, and in his mind he clothed it with a thousand attributes begotten by the thousand emotions in his heart. Thus he pictured to himself a woman's form, in part like the golden effigy, in part embodying the ideals and associations of his heart.

"My unknown bride!"—the words at last escaped his lips. "See how I yearn for thee! I count the days that separate me from thee, O seraphic vision! How long, how long!

"My unknown bride, who art thou? Reveal thyself to me! I am weary of waiting! For five long years have I rocked myself to sleep with thoughts of thee. How long more, how long more! Reveal thyself to me that I may practise love." He kissed the feet of the golden image.

"My beautiful, my beautiful, see how I love thee! O Unknown One, hear how I love thee! I have built thee a temple in my heart—and thou art its sole idol! Then come to me, come to me! . . . What else shall I be to thee and thou to me, when thou hast come? Even this: thou shalt be my Aladdin, and I shall be thy jinn—the slave of thy lamp, of thy merest wish!

"What else, beloved, what else wouldst thou have? Wouldst thou the jewels of Jaipur hang around thy neck, and Delhi's 'enchanted garland' upon thy bosom rest? Wouldst thou the 'frost-flowers' of Cuttack mingle with thy hair, and Sakuntala's lost ring slip on thy wedded hand? Even these and all earth besides shall be thine to command.

“ Oh, how I love thee already, my unknown bride ! How I love thee most each day of my life ! Yesterday I loved thee most, not knowing to-day. To-day I love thee most—that is, more than yesterday. Tomorrow I shall love thee most : thus unto all eternity. Then come to me, my love, reveal thyself to me ! Oh, what a bridal we shall have—what a bridal we shall have ! ”

In the ecstasy he saw a vision of his future bride—not as any particular woman, but as the object of his love : and in the picture he heaped tenderness upon her in imagination, enfolding her in his arms, kissing her face, her hands, even the fringe of her garment—mentally enacting scenes and incidents spontaneously as they suggested themselves, just to manifest the ardour of his love, yea, its abandonment, its sacrifice. Then a yearning arose to particularise the picture—to make it concrete and an actual portrait. Thus alone could he concentrate upon it his deepest heart. Prompted by some vague impulse his gaze rested upon the garland, and would not be averted.

“ Nora, is it you ? Let me breathe your name after five long years ! Nora, do you hear me ? Is it you whose coming I must await ? Then learn my secret : the moment I first beheld you my heart leaped within me. From that hour I learnt my truest mission. Then come to me, reveal yourself to me ! Let me lay all my joys at your feet : let me take all your sorrows upon my head. Give me that partnership ; for then the sorrows would cease to be sorrows, and become like unto joys. What is sorrow to me, what is pain to me ? I would have mine—and yours as well.

“Nora, do you hear me ? Behold, we were far divided at our birth by nature's gifts and half the planet's girth—and speech and faith and rage and bloody wars. Yet, full half the planet have I crossed to find my Search, and my ancient speech do I forsake to teach my tongue to lisp your name : and bloody wars and cruel wrongs do I forgive, to win your love and make you mine. Then come to me, come to me ! I would wrap you in silks and pearls, and smother you in roses.

“Nora, do you hear me ? I have spread my dreams beneath your feet ! My heart leaped within me when I first beheld you, for in finding you I found my mission. Then come and fulfil yours also. Together let us bridge the gulf of war and carnage. Let the dead bury the dead ; together let us heal the wounds of years. How long, how long, shall blood and carnage part us asunder ! How long—oh, how long—shall the serpents of the earth bring death into paradise ! Nora, do you hear me ? East and West are but one. Then fulfil your mission : together let us unite East and West. What was Ferdinand, what was Isabella ? Together let us discover a newer world. Columbus searched for India, and found a new world : together let us find a new India, and thus a newer world—the world of East and West wedded together in peace and love. Come, beloved, together let us be immortal ! ”

With the words of ecstasy undried upon his lips Barath stood still. It was early dawn, and the city was astir. He heard a conch shell awaking the people to life, to prayer, to struggle, to sacrifice.

A great fear came upon him. Perhaps he had departed from the spirit of the *mantra*. The *mantra* should have

made him wholly Eastern : instead he had named Nora. The *mantra* should have bidden him await his call in faith and hope : instead in exultation he and Nora had sat upon the throne of Ferdinand and Isabella.

More than that : in the East a man may indeed proclaim to the world the fact of his love, but he must not reveal the name of his beloved to God Himself, nor depict her virtues. For even the mother will clutch her babe to her breast, and call it disparaging names—thinking thus to hoodwink God that may be jealous of her deepest love.

“What have I said—oh, what have I said ? I have sinned—God forgive me ! I have presumed to name my mission, not awaiting Thy light ! I have presumed to name my love and have called her Nora, forgetting that Thou art a jealous God ! I have presumed to place her upon an altar and clothe her with many attributes—forgetting that Thou canst send her a tribulation for each attribute, O jealous God !

“Nora, forgive me ! I have wronged you—I have called you beautiful ! I retract my words ; I swear you are not beautiful—so let God avert from you tribulation ! Your gentleness, sweetness, tenderness are as nought. . . . Nora, forgive this treason ! Let me be a traitor to you to save you pain !

“Is that all the greater proof of my love, O jealous God ? I vow I do not love her—spare her tribulation ! She is not my queen—let her live unscathed ! She is not my guardian angel—from Thy jealousy deliver her ! She is not my sole idol—from Thy wrath deliver her ! . . .

“But she is, she is, she is—God, avert Thy hearing ! She is my all, my hope, my joy, my dream, my vision—

in mercy be deaf, O God ! Do not hear me retract my treason to Nora ! . . .

“What do I say again, what do I say—I may have lost Nora forever ! Can I meet her yet across seven seas and half the earth ? Be still, my heart, be still—do not mock me with vain hope ! I have lost Nora forever ! She is dead, she is wedded to another, she has forgotten me—she has forgotten me, she is wedded to another, she is dead !

“Farewell, Nora, peace be with you ! I must resign you forever. I have launched my bark upon the bosom of the deep, come what may. Farewell, farewell, farewell !”

CHAPTER XXX

MELNOR'S MOVE

AFTER the *mantra* Barath remained in the seclusion of the palace, though deeply concerned in the welfare of his people.

Vashista was glad. The people of Barathpur had now come to regard their ruler with devotion ; and if there seemed to be some mystery attached to his personality, it tended all the more to increase the popular reverence.

Then suddenly Vashista was perturbed. Three months later Lord Melnor returned to Barathpur, having visited high officials in British India and studied Indian problems—which he did rapidly because of his diplomatic experience. He had even paid short visits in his motor-car to remote parts to which there was no railway.

Vashista feared the return of Western influence on Barath. He modified his plans : formerly he had avoided Melnor ; now he sought to meet him.

Madhava was now acting as dewan, awaiting a definite selection. All the older men to whom the appointment had been offered had declined it : they had all served under Vashista, and knew there was peril in the acceptance. So Madhava remained Vashista's right hand.

Melnor met Madhava occasionally, and sometimes

came to the dewan's office. Because of Madhava's English education Melnor found it very interesting to discuss with him the European improvements introduced into Barathpur. He was struck by the swiftness with which they were assimilated and put into practice already.

"You must be delighted with the rapid progress Barathpur has made and will make in the near future," he said to Madhava one day in candid appreciation. "It will soon be the model State in India, and, I must confess, ahead of British provinces—at least in industrial and economic enterprise. Then it seems a pity that it should not also equal and then outstrip British provinces in social legislation."

Madhava was troubled. He knew that the equality with British provinces referred to the express legalisation of widow-marriage; the superiority to the abolition or modification of the compulsory dowry and the joint-family-system.

"Why not begin with the first, the equality?" Melnor asked.

"Gladly—if the High Priest consents. It lies within his sphere; for it is a matter of interpretation of the Shastras. Widow-marriage is not forbidden, but not mentioned."

"Then you must persuade Barath."

"His Highness must accept the interpretation of the High Priest in this and cognate matters," Madhava answered.

"I am sure Barath will do that—but will also accept the course that he sees to be most humane and just. He is a true Englishman!" This Melnor added in enthusiasm.

A voice answered him : " A true Hindu, nevertheless ! "

Lord Melnor turned, and saw the tall, gaunt figure of Vashista.

" Oh, the High Priest ! "

" And Barath's spiritual guide," Vashista added, bowing.

The mutual glances were studiously courteous, yet there was a veiled antagonism in them.

" Also the keeper of Barath's conscience," Vashista said after a pause.

Melnor smiled. He could not help noticing the English analogy. " Oh, Cardinal Wolsey ! "

Vashista accepted the compliment, but continued enigmatically, " And Cardinal Alberoni. Perhaps also Hildebrand."

" I am afraid I do not understand." Melnor could not help smiling at the persistent European analogies. " It seems to me somewhat contradictory. Alberoni placed a king on a high pedestal, or tried to. Hildebrand cursed a king for the good of his soul."

" You will understand my meaning if the occasion arises for the alternative—though I hope it never will."

" You will, however, admit one contradiction. Hildebrand was no doubt a High Priest, but Alberoni was more : he was also prime minister."

The shot went home. Vashista was no longer the dewan of Barathpur.

" The High Priest suffices," he answered. " In spiritual matters and in matters of conscience it shall be my duty to keep Barath in the path of his forefathers."

" Certainly. It is the express policy of the Imperial

Government not to interfere with any Indian custom having a religious basis."

"I am glad to have your assurance. I beg to inform you that it has been decided not to abolish by legal enactment in Barathpur an ancient custom which has a religious basis—suttee."

Melnor was astounded. "When was it decided, may I ask?"

"Quite recently, when the question happened to arise in the revision of existing statutes, customs, and usages. Though certain customs may be unpractised, I, as High Priest, could not advise their express abolition by statute, if they had a religious basis."

It was in Melnor's mind to mention yet another English analogy—about a presumptuous priest that ruled his master too long. But he checked himself.

"Do you mean to say that Barath has sanctioned the tacit retention of so barbarous a custom, so that it could actually be practised if so desired in any particular case? I am surprised!"

"May I ask if you happen to know what suttee really is? I will pay you the high compliment of thinking that you may."

"I believe it is common knowledge," Melnor answered. "It seems quite obvious what suttee is."

"So obvious that the combined intellect of Europe has failed to understand it. I was hoping that you alone might have understood it."

"Then pray explain what it is," Melnor asked.

"Gladly. The essence of suttee is the Hindu wife's superior position spiritually as compared with that of her husband. Her status is intrinsically higher than that of any wife in the world—which may be news to you."

"It is," Melnor answered drily.

"No doubt, though I was again hoping that you might be the one exception. But it seems impossible for the profoundest philosophy of the West to understand the trivialities of the East. To proceed: in life the Hindu wife's sanction and participation is essential to her husband's confirmation in his faith and in his destiny—aye, in his proclamation as an emperor. In death her husband has no power over his own soul, much less over that of his wife. But she has absolute power over his: by one single act of self-immolation she can save his soul from a thousand wanderings, and her own soul likewise. To use the language of Christianity, she confers the crown of martyrdom upon herself and upon her husband by the self-same act. That is suttee."

"But how cruel to be burnt alive!"

"That is a common European error. The fire indeed consumes her body with that of her husband, but her death is due to the cup of oblivion that she drinks before mounting the pyre. The fire is for the cremation."

"Nevertheless it is a cruel death."

"No," Vashista answered in rising exaltation. "The noblest that a mortal can have! And that privilege is reserved for a woman in India! The West knows how to live, the East how to die. The art of dying is greater than the art of living: ask Barath, yea Barath. Would you learn how to die? Then come and watch a suttee. From the moment she starts in the funeral procession, hallowed and anointed, she is not a mortal, but a divinity. The deaf and dumb, the blind and maimed, the sick and dying, all are brought to her and placed by the pathway so that the shadow of her garment

may fall upon them and cure them. That is suttee. It is the pilgrimage of Lourdes intensified a thousand-fold and the apotheosis of womanhood ! ”

“ But if she declines the ordeal her life is made a perpetual misery, a hell on earth.”

“ Which is another error of the West,” Vashista answered warmly. “ An unpardonable error, as there is a Western analogy to explain the truth. Where suttee is not practised—as now in Barathpur—but where it is customary for the widow to make the offer as a mere formality to show her love, if she declines even that formal offer then no doubt she falls in public estimation. But where suttee is actually practised, if she finds that the vocation for it is denied her and so declines the ordeal, she no more suffers in public estimation than the maiden in Catholic Europe who enters a convent, but finding no real vocation for the religious life, returns to the world, marries, and brings up a family.”

“ Yet there have been gross abuses. She has often been forced into it—by the priesthood.”

“ No doubt ; priests are but human. But in Barathpur we shall take care that she has an absolute freedom of choice.”

“ Barath has a sister——”

“ Rani Delini,” Vashista added.

“ I understand she is married to the ruler of an adjacent territory who is an invalid. Some day Rani Delini may become a widow——”

“ Which proves the absolute sincerity of Barath's motives,” Vashista answered.

“ One last argument. I must remind you that suttee was abolished in British India even in the days of the

East India Company : an act of humanity accepted by the people."

"Rather, it was a confession of the Company's inability to guard against abuses in its own territories. Would you really be humane and yet strong? Then practise what you preach! Listen: in the last few years four millions of lives have been lost in India from plague alone. The Hindus burn their dead, the Mohammedans bury them: but the two hundred thousand Parsis in India, your special friends and protégés, expose their dead—and afterwards the vultures dip their beaks in the drinking pools of the Indian Empire. Thus you allow an infinitesimal minority of two hundred thousand to contaminate the rest of the three hundred millions. You cannot abolish that—though you abolished suttee! I dislike using the word hypocrisy——"

"There is no need to," Melnor answered. "You forget that it is the express policy of the British Government since the Mutiny not to interfere in any Indian custom having a religious basis, however gross and superstitious."

"So the Parsis are Indians after all!" Vashista said in sarcasm. "Whenever the Parsis do anything fine—and they have many fine qualities—I read in the English papers that they are not really Indians but the descendants of Persian settlers. For the glory they are Persians, for the evil Indians! Would you escape the charge of the future historian that you are allowing the Parsi dead to contaminate all India? Then call together the leaders of the Parsis—and they are enlightened men—and put it to them plainly that they must choose some other method of disposing of their dead. If they decline—well then show your strength: the rest of the

three hundred millions will applaud you. But if you don't——”

“ Well ? ”

“ Then the plague may reach Europe some day—and you will hear about it. Even though we lose millions of lives meanwhile, it is to our ultimate interest that some Indian matters should come under the notice of all Europe—and the Hague Conference. Including our treaties.”

With that Parthian shot Vashista departed.

Lord Melnor thought long and deeply. He realised the enormous power Vashista still possessed in Barathpur.

“ Yes, I must do it,” he resolved at last. “ For Barath’s sake, for England’s sake.”

He sent a message to a friend in the Cabinet who was a personal friend of the Secretary-of-State for India. The Secretary-of-State for India was the greatest autocrat on earth. His Council ruled India, but he chose his Council and in his own name, not in the name of his Sovereign. Thus he had power to appoint, if he so chose, the British Resident at Barathpur.

Melnor would be that Resident. For Barath’s sake, for England’s sake.

CHAPTER XXXI

BARATH'S CALIPHATE

THE plot was thickening. In every move Vashista had sought to play Alberoni to Barath, and to guard against every chance that might thwart him which he could foresee. Then suddenly there fell upon him, like a thunderbolt from the blue, a contingency that threatened to frustrate his purpose altogether, against which no foresight could have availed.

Madhava had just received a private message from Simla, and, calling Vindara, came hot-foot to Vashista. He silently handed the message to the High Priest. Its effect upon him was instant.

"This is the hour," Vashista said, "and the beginning of the final crisis!" He looked at Madhava and Vindara; but they were silent. They knew not all that he knew.

"Since the death of Queen Victoria, upon whom be peace," Vashista continued—and at the mention of her name all three bowed—"Queen Victoria, whom India mourns as Empress, ay, as the human emblem of the Earth-Mother, all India has awaited the proclamation of her beloved son as Emperor. A great Durbar is to be held in Delhi for the proclamation, to which all reigning Princes will be invited, rulers of all grades, from the sons of the House of Rama, 'friends and allies,'

to vassal chieftains. It could be made the opportunity for securing once for all the love and loyalty and ardent devotion of all India to England, Princes and people alike. Instead it is to be used to manifest the might of England as unquestionably the Paramount Power—by reducing all sovereign Princes, the friends and allies included, to the level of vassal chieftains! Madhava, read again the message.”

“These are the exact words of my correspondent,” Madhava answered. “‘I am informed that the ceremonious visits paid by the Princes to the Viceroy on the occasion of the Durbar will not be returned. A public notification to this effect will shortly be made.’”

“Which means that the treaty made by the British with each of the sovereign Princes will be torn up at the Durbar!” Vashista cried in bitterness.

“Perhaps the British Government does not intend that meaning,” Vindara suggested.

“But the act suffices—as it did at Jhansi,” Vashista exclaimed, looking at Madhava. “It was ever thus; the perfidy begun by the East India Company has not ceased. Oh, the hypocrisy of it! We read in the British papers of the perfidy of Russia in tearing up the Treaty of Paris—and so on and so forth of other countries and other treaties. But what will they say of this?”

“They will never even know of it, or our opinion about it,” Vindara answered. “I have still a lingering faith in the justice of the British public if they only knew the truth about us and our standpoint—if they were not deluded by their political writers on India. Instead, they will only read of the Durbar as a gorgeous pageant—but not its inner and vital significance to us.”

“I do not know the British public personally, where-

fore whether they are just or unjust," Vashista said ; " so I must judge them by their representatives in India."

He also thought long and deeply.

" This indeed is the beginning of the final crisis, and we must force matters." As the contingency had been unforeseen, the only way to counteract its effect was by some desperate action. He resolved upon it.

" On the morrow I must see Nishi Kashe and Chandra Sena, and hear of the progress of their works." This he said without indicating what bearing Nishi and Chandra had upon the present crisis ; and neither Madhava nor Vindara knew of the details of their works. For Vashista was the connecting link between them all.

" But this night I must hasten to see a Princess," the High Priest added.

But Vindara also resolved upon an immediate act, though he did not reveal it.

That night Barath had been conversing with Melnor in the palace, as often before ; but now there seemed to be some restraint upon Barath's conversation. There was something in his mind : some instinct drawing him to solitude, to commune with his thoughts. To the inner palace.

So the friends parted early, whilst the evening was half unspent.

As Melnor returned to his apartments he found a message on his table, addressed to him in English. He opened it and read :—

" Come to-night to the Suttée Garden beyond the southern city gate. You will hear something important. *From a foe that was, and yet shall be—but in this a friend.*"

Melnor knew the value of such a message. Messages of any kind were seldom sent in India. When they came, they had something to convey. It was so before the Mutiny—except that they were neglected. Melnor resolved not to neglect this. . . .

But first let us follow Barath.

He went into the garden of the inner palace. A sense of melancholy was creeping over him. Having given up Nora, he needed some object to think of and to love even silently in his heart ; but he had none. He stood by the pool beyond the porch where he had met Suvona again on the day of his return nine months before. At the thought of her he dimly felt that he had been wanting in something, had failed in something. He knew not what it exactly was, but still felt a sense of self-reproach.

This was her portion of the palace, and he lingered in the garden, hoping, yet fearing.

And then his sister, his little sister, came to him : just for a brief moment in response to his unvoiced call, to wipe away his melancholy. The High Priest had just exhorted her to play Sita—and to place her Rama upon his throne of promise, and herself beside him. Instead—Suvona came to Barath to comfort him. Seated at the porch, he did not know of her presence till she came and stood behind him and placed her hands softly on his shoulders.

“Thou art weary and heart-sick,” she said, bending down and looking into his eyes. “All last night thou didst not sleep.”

Barath found no answer. True, he had walked at night in the inner garden and paced the silent corridors of the palace. So Suvona had seen him, and kept silent vigil over him ? He looked at her face.

"Yes, I saw thee," she answered simply, though the question was unasked. Then a great tenderness arose in her heart. She knew that he was thinking of Delini. "Yes, thou hast none to love of thy own blood, save Delini. Go to her!"

Barath shook his head. Though in actual mileage Delini was not far away, there was no railway communication; and the week needed merely to reach her and return, by camel or elephant, was more than he could spare from his duties.

"Think less of thy people, and more of thyself," Suvona answered his tacit objection. "And perhaps in thinking more of thyself thou wilt benefit thy people more." She looked into his eyes and asked softly, "Hast a great yearning to see Delini? To find comfort? Nay, do not tell me! I understand. Since thy *mantra* thou art working vehemently in conscious moments; but at other times thy heart is weary, and craving for comfort—for love. Then go to Delini!"

Barath's tongue was loosened. He caught up the fringe of Suvona's veil and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Oh, Suvona, thou art not human, but a peri of paradise! Here for nine moons thou hast silently watched over me like a sister, even as Delini could have done—then when my ungrateful heart does not come to thee for comfort, or even with the thanks of a brother's love, thou wouldst still find me that comfort through Delini. The labour thine, the merit of giving the comfort Delini's! Oh, Suvona, thou dost waste thy solicitude: I am not worthy of my brotherhood!"

Verily he was glad that Suvona had not seen the golden image. She knew that a golden effigy of his

future wife had been made for the sake of the *mantra*, but with innate delicacy had not seen it, nor had sought through Vashista to know anything of its representation ; nor even did she know Kamona's hidden mission while serving her in the inner palace. Had she learnt, in whatsoever manner, of a suggested resemblance to her in the golden image, the joy of lavishing upon Barath even a sister's love would have been denied her.

"Suvona, let me make reparation. Thou art my comfort, even as Delini might have been. But what is better, in realising thy continued solicitude, thy silent vigil over me even in the hours of the night, I have no need of comfort. See, I am now wholly Eastern—being confirmed by the *mantra*. Yes, Suvona, I now confess what thou hast perceived but generously hast refused to utter : in the *mantra* there was a conflict within me with Western ideals. But now I am wholly Eastern in this that I accept the inevitable."

"It is well ! Be resigned to the inevitable. Thus shalt thou deserve the highest bliss—even perchance that which thou dost resign as unattainable !"

"Cease, Suvona !" Barath cried in agitation. She knew not what her words meant to Barath. He had resigned all thoughts of Nora, but Suvona's words meant to him that he might still win Nora by resigned renunciation : or perchance Suvona knew ! "Art thou a woman ? Is such magnanimity human ? Suvona, leave me—my very presence may be a treason to thee and a profanation !"

"Hush, do not say that !" she whispered in vague fear. . . . Then smiling sweetly, she said, "Yes, I am but a woman—or as thou dost really think in thy inmost heart, but a child."

Barath made to answer, but she stopped him. "Yes, thou dost think me but a child—else thy acts might have been a little different, just a little." In that there was a gentle reproach. Giving him no time to reply, and changing her tone quickly to lightness as she departed, she said, "But I shall come to thee again and be thy sister. Now go and find comfort—if Delini be far away, go to those thou canst love, even a friendless dog or a leper." . . . Barath felt coals of fire heaped upon his head. Yes, he could love a friendless dog or a leper, and therein find comfort : but Suvona, whose care and solicitude he accepted almost as a matter of course, could give him none. Perchance because in his inmost heart he *feared* to take comfort from her hand.

Giving him no time to answer, and only at the corridor, she added, "I am but human. It is thou who art more than human."

Saying this with downcast eyes, she vanished ere Barath could reply. . . .

Driven by a sudden impulse, Barath left the garden. He felt a yearning to go into the world, the world he had not seen since his returning, labouring incessantly for his people. Aye, since the *mantra* which had been like a second baptism to purify him from possible transgressions of caste-laws in Europe, he had been shut up in the palace, hedged in by a thousand ceremonials—so that he could not eat, sleep, breathe, and live except by prescribed formulas.

Passing by a lower verandah in the outer palace, he noticed an old man in mufti. After a second's thought he knew him to be Moolraj, whom he had always seen in full dress. These must be his dwelling apartments.

Moolraj was seated on a cushion, cross-legged in

Indian fashion. Beside him was a boy, aged about nineteen or twenty. In talking to him, Moolraj had an affectionate hand on his shoulder. Barath did not recognise the boy, nevertheless was attracted by him. He entered the verandah.

Noticing his master suddenly, Moolraj tried to rise quickly ; but his bones were aged.

"Be seated, Moolraj," Barath said. "I was only passing."

With both hands on the boy's shoulder in the attempt to rise, Moolraj paused, then whispered to his son, "Girbur Gulab, make obeisance for us both."

The boy knelt down, placed both his hands on his brow, and made obeisance with his head on the ground. The fullest obeisance possible.

"Hail, Krishna !" he spoke from his heart ; "I am Girbur Gulab whom thou didst restore to life from the ocean."

A vague emotion, felt once before, surged over Barath's heart. But the proclamation was too sudden for him to accept it. It was not sudden for Girbur Gulab, for he had rehearsed the homage in his heart all the years of his youth.

"No, not from the ocean, Girbur Gulab, but from the hands of the herdsman," Barath corrected. "And now, Girbur Gulab, ask leave of thy father to come with me. I would see the city."

Moolraj's eyes glistened with pride. "My son, go with thy Caliph, and guard him well."

Beyond the outer gate of the palace they came to the serai. As ever, a motley group was gathered there, smoking their hookahs and listening to one another's tales. Unrecognised, Barath mingled among them.

A strapping young Sikh on the outer fringe, who abhorred tobacco, told of fierce fights with dacoits in Burmah and Arrakan. A wizened old greybeard with a vacant, stony gaze had weird and unearthly rites to paint, with bony finger and bated breath, of devil-dancers in the wild caves of Travancore. A fat and prosperous Parsi merchant in a long-funnelled hat told of thieves and cheats down Poona Ghat who had made him drunk with *ganja*, and confiscated half his grand-sire's savings. A handsome Rajput sowar twirled his fine moustache and whispered of a gold bangle mysteriously flung to him from an upper window, and how he had walked there three nights in succession in vain, trying to discover its owner; for according to the laws of his caste it could only have come from a maiden in distress—and surely she must be beautiful. And so on, and so on, they all told their tales with voice and gesture—and none was found there to gainsay a word or vary an incident by one small devil.

Barath smiled. Yes, the people must have their tales of an evening after the day's work, and when truth failed, fiction was at hand. Then the story-teller—who followed the most ancient profession in the East, wherefore, on this planet—could come forth and earn his supper by narrating at the serai the loves and deeds of heroes and demigods: and by narrating the same wondrous tale to beguile a king as he lay weary upon his crystal couch, could earn the garland of pearls on the king's neck—enough for all his daughters' dowries.

Going from there, Barath and his companion passed through the park and field leading to the city. At the field they paused. A few yards away they saw a man standing, with hands at his breast. The stranger raised

his hands aloft, and fell full length on the ground upon his face. Crawling on his knees to the point marked by the outstretched hands, he arose, again uplifted the hands and measured his length upon the ground. Thus he progressed till he reached a tree. He made a mark upon the bark.

"Dost understand, Girbur Gulab?" Barath asked. "He does penance. Every day he measures with his body a given length, and from there he starts the next day, and so on till the end of his pilgrimage is reached. He may be three months already on the journey, or thirteen years."

The man sat down under the tree that marked the limit of the day's penance, and brought out from his girdle his supper of unleavened bread. From that Barath understood that his journey had already been long enough to be many miles from his former home: that the supper was the offering of some passer-by laid beside his path earlier in the day.

When the man had eaten, he drew his blanket around him, his sole garb besides his loin-cloth. He would sleep beneath the tree. But Barath drew near, and said to him:—

"Brother, the day's task is over. Come with us to the city. Then, if thou wilt, return to the tree."

The stranger arose. "Gladly shall I come," he answered. Thereby he might gain merit, and thus shorten his penance. "Where shall we begin?"

"At the old city," Barath answered.

The old city was a fragment out of the Middle Ages. They saw a young cavalier prancing and curveting his steed, as if to show off his horsemanship. But ever and anon he glanced back, as if casually, and made

a detour of the side streets. They took no notice of him then.

Passing a quaint old shop, they paused. The owner, an old man with a snow-white beard, was sitting cross-legged, painting on a piece of ivory. On the back wall were a few other miniatures on ivory, and some larger paintings on sandal-wood.

They looked at the pictures.

"Father, why work so late?" Barath asked suddenly.

The old man put down his horn spectacles. "Because I must, though it does hurt my eyes," he said with a sigh. "I have sold nothing for a month."

"And this portrait?"

"A mere hazard," the artist answered. "I must hasten with it to live. If it pleases the buyer, he will give for it fifty rupees."

Barath looked at the work. "It is said he is the best artist in Barathpur," the stranger whom they had met in the fields whispered to Barath. And yet the painter could not make a bare living in Barathpur.

Barath felt that he had failed in something.

"Father, they would give fifty pieces of gold and fifty of silver for it in London. But come on the morrow to the palace. I have a friend there who would see thee."

They passed through a street of many mansions, wide apart, with beautiful gardens. A man in a frayed choga was singing, with an instrument of seven strings. Barath listened to the words of the songs. They were fragments of the Sanskrit classics, telling of the deeds of heroes and demigods. But he also heard one in Hindi which was new to him. Yes, its author was the minstrel himself.

Yet it was only at every tenth or twelfth mansion that the sirkar of the rich thakur or zemindar came forth, and put a handful of copper and small silver into the minstrel's bag.

And Barath felt that so far he had failed in something.

"Come to the palace on the morrow," he said to the bard. "I have a friend there who would hear thy own poems."

And likewise with the two pundits in a side street, who sat cross-legged opposite each other, and discussed from musty scrolls spread before them.

"Come to the palace and reveal your wisdom."

The pundits looked at Barath gravely. "But where is Vikra-maditya?" they asked.

Vikra-maditya was the ancient Hindu Emperor of India who boasted that he possessed a necklace of the nine most wondrous gems—a poet, a painter, a dramatist, a philosopher, and five other pundits; and all the nine sat around his throne.

"You may find the new Vikra-maditya some day—in London," Barath said to them. "Meanwhile come to the palace here."

They passed on to the new city. But just at the boundary they saw a small house close to the street, and heard a woman's wail. Suddenly the wail burst into a song of lamentation, a rhapsody of grief, incoherent, senseless—a flood of superlatives comparing her lost child to the sun, moon, and the stars, calling him to return to her, mingled with the frenzy of despair that he could not come. The child had died in the evening, and ever and anon at that same hour for days to come she would thus sing her lamentation, making up the words out of her grief.

Yes, Barath remembered. When he first landed at Naples after Zapponi's death, he went to see the city with a party of others under a tourists' guide. They came to a church in the evening. It was Holy Week, and the church was dark inside, save for a triangle of candles which were put out one by one. And meanwhile he heard a chant, which, the guide told him, was called the Lamentation of Jeremiah.

"Yes, I realised at once that it was some lamentation, though not its name or theme," Barath had answered.

And now he knew that a like lamentation was sung daily in a thousand homes in India.

Passing by the house, they glanced and saw that the stricken mother was in the verandah quite close to the roadway. The woman was of humble rank. Girbur Gulab glanced at his master—he that had comforted Moolraj when Girbur was lost.

But Barath bowed his head and passed on. "Leave her to the comfort of her tears," he said. "It is the one comfort she can have. . . ."

In the new city they met other scenes in contrast. The streets and bazaars were crowded. At a house with a projecting balcony they heard a woman's dulcet voice, from behind a pinjra lattice, singing a love-song, with a mandoline. The song ended, and awhile after a young lordling emerged with uneasy steps. Girbur Gulab glanced at him quickly, and averted his head. It was Prem Singh.

"Do not name him," Barath said as quickly. Yet he felt he would like to know his story.

"He has brought shame upon his grandsire," the stranger answered instead, the penitent from the fields.

"Thus he seeks to find relief in forbidden wine. But he does not find it."

"Is he the only impenitent sinner in the city?" Barath said. "Then it is well!"

The stranger, he that had been a sinner himself and knew others, looked at Barath, but said nothing.

Barath understood. "If there be others, show them to me," he said. He felt reckless. "I would know the worst."

The stranger led on silently.

"I would forgive anything, save the oppression of the poor," Barath added.

The guide changed his direction at the words. They passed by the house and office of the kotwal (city magistrate). Having jurisdiction by day or by night, there was a guard in the courtyard under a jemadar.

"Within that building thou couldst search and find, but it is beyond my power to investigate." The guide came to the bazaar within the shadow of the kotwal's office. There he looked round carefully.

"There are others, but these two are close together," he said, leading them to a side of the bazaar. The first was a grain-seller; the second dealt in oils, ghee (clarified butter), milk, and all the products of milk.

"Mark the first," the stranger said.

A buyer came and asked for an anna worth of rice, which implied that his means were small. The seller was weighing the rice, but seeing the customer's attention momentarily distracted he tilted the scales gently till the edge of the pan holding the rice picked up a hooked wire: and the bottom of the wire was attached to a small ball of lead.

“ By the weight of the lead he has given short weight of the rice,” the stranger said.

“ How long has he done this ? ” Barath asked.

“ Probably as long as he has been here ; ten years.”

“ And how long has he cheated this particular customer ? ”

“ About the same time. Customers at the bazaar seldom change.”

Barath made a mental calculation. Seeing that the customer remained awhile in the bazaar to buy at other stalls, he said to his guide, “ But the other ? What does he do ? ”

“ Adulterates,” the stranger answered. “ Inferior oils with superior ; buffalo’s ghee for cow’s ghee ; and sells milk with some of its cream extracted, which babes drink and find poor nourishment.”

A woman, old and poor, bought half an anna of the milk.

“ She is too old to have a babe,” the stranger commented. “ The milk must be for a grandchild. By which token, also, the mother must be dead, or too ill and feeble to suckle her babe.”

Barath turned quickly.

“ Stay here,” he said to the stranger. To the boy, “ Girbur Gulab, hasten and bring up the kotwal’s guard.”

Himself, he went first to the man who had bought the rice, and said—

“ Uncle, thou hast money to receive.”

The man counted the change from the four-anna piece he had given the grain-seller.

“ It is correct,” he answered, shaking his head. “ I have no money to receive.”

"Nay, the grain-seller owes thee much," Barath affirmed. "Stay awhile."

Then he went to the woman, and said—

"Mother, thou hast money to receive."

She counted her little change of coppers.

"No, I have no money to receive," she also answered.

"Nay, the milk-seller owes thee much. Stay awhile."

Then the kotwal's guard of ten men came up.

"Arrest the grain-seller and the milk-seller," Barath bade them.

Then because of the commotion the kotwal himself heard of it, and hastened. Recognising Barath, he made obeisance.

"Do instant justice," Barath bade him. "What is the law?"

"The criminal must return tenfold for the first conviction," the kotwal answered.

Meanwhile the guards had opened the iron chests containing in rupees and gold mohurs the hoards of the two prisoners.

Barath turned to the man who had bought the rice. "I said the grain-seller owed thee much. Now take these hundred rupees, which is tenfold of what thou hast been cheated in these years."

And the hundred rupees were a small fortune to the man that had been cheated.

Turning to the woman, Barath said, "I told thee that the milk-seller owed thee much. Take these fifty rupees, which is tenfold of what he has cheated thee." And the poor woman was overwhelmed with her wealth.

With the criminals themselves Barath dealt differently. First the grain-seller.

"Restoration has been made; but what of thy separate punishment?"

The man bowed his head, standing between two guards, and was silent.

"For thy first crime detected I shall give thee forgiveness; but if thou art caught again thou shalt restore fortyfold. Now, go."

Then the milk-seller.

"Thy crime is greater, for thou hast jeopardised human lives. Go, thou art free! But if thou art caught again thou shalt receive a hundred lashes as an example to Barathpur—perhaps to the world. In a distant country, *patal-desh* (antipodes), there are men who have amassed wealth equal to the ransom of ten kings by cheating the people. They have sold oil to the people—and the people must have light—but oil that may explode at any moment and imperil the lives of a family. For such a crime the penalty at Barathpur would be lashes: instead in their own country they are called multi-millionaires, and receive the homage of poor princes and thakurs who seek to marry their daughters. But we shall set them an example. Now, go and do penance—lest thou receive a hundred lashes."

Then Barath turned to the kotwal.

"How is it, Kotwal-jī, that these things have happened within the shadow of thy office? Thou hast served six years as kotwal."

The magistrate humbled himself. "I have trusted to my jemadars. I should have visited personally—as my Master has done. In that I have sinned." Saying this, he took off the girdle of office.

"Thou art forgiven," Barath answered. "Remain in office; but as a penance repay personally whatsoever

other claims may come against the fraudulent grain-seller and milk-seller. I have spoken."

Hearing these, the vast multitude that had gathered, but had stood silent, loosened their tongues.

"The judgment of Krishna! *Jai! Jai! Barath ke jai!*"

And even the few Moslems, traders come to Barathpur, shouted, "A Suleiman! A Suleiman!"

Going from there with Girbur Gulab and turning homewards, Barath missed the stranger, the penitent from the fields. For now Barath's identity was known, and no man might walk with him without command.

At the old city they saw again the young cavalier. He was still prancing his steed, and ever and anon glancing back anxiously. Then from afar a travelling palanquin of gorgeous array came up, borne on the shoulders of eight men, four to the front pole, four to the rear; and an old nurse walked by its side. The nurse, or chaperon, showed to the world that the occupant of the palanquin was unmarried; and the eight bearers, instead of four, that she had come from a distance.

Seeing the palanquin, the cavalier walked his horse slowly and allowed the palanquin to pass him, keeping abreast just a minute. Then he hastened, drew up level, and allowed the palanquin to pass him again. Yet a third time.

Then suddenly the curtain parted, and the unveiled face of a maiden appeared—of course to say a word to the nurse. But meeting the cavalier's gaze she forgot in her confusion that she was unveiled, and returned the gaze in hesitation before recovering her self-possession and withdrawing her face. But in that second the cavalier had raised the hilt of his sword to his lips.

Barath noted the silent homage, and smiled.

"Who is that youth?" he asked.

"The son of the thakur of——"

"Nay, do not mention the name, but tell me his story."

"He saw the maiden as a child just before she was veiled," Girbur Gulab answered; "and now he seeks to marry her. Her father will receive offers from many suitors, including this, of which she will hear from her mother. So if she favours this man, she will tell her mother to choose him in preference to all others. He has awaited this opportunity for many days, to plead his suit mutely, albeit for a second. He has now found the opportunity on her return from the pre-nuptial visit to her grandparents: and the fact that her face appeared at the curtain gives him hope that his love is returned."

Barath mused. So the parents did not always make the marriages, though they thought they did! There was still romance, medieval romance, in Barathpur.

"But how dost thou know these things, Girbur Gulab?" he asked.

Girbur Gulab hung his head bashfully. "Because—because——"

"Yes?" Barath asked encouragingly.

"Because my father will find a wife for me in that manner some day."

Barath looked at the boy.

"Hast found thy choice, Girbur Gulab?" he asked softly. The boy cast down his eyes in confusion. "Some little maiden thou hast—nay, do not answer. But come to me in the fulness of time. I would plead for thee with her father and thine."

In that happy mood Barath and his companion entered the fields leading to the park before the palace. There the stranger, their guide in the city, approached diffidently to take leave of Barath.

"I return to the tree," he said simply.

Barath felt his mission not yet completed. "When does thy pilgrimage end?" he asked the stranger gently.

"In three years more."

Barath mentally calculated; it was a simple arithmetical problem. But the result astonished him.

At the end of the three years the penitent would arrive at the far side of the palace from the tree—the outer palace, the hall of audience; perhaps the foot of the throne. The goal of his pilgrimage was Barath.

An overwhelming emotion surged over Barath's heart: joy and exultation, mingled with an intense pain. Then the joy and exultation ceased, and the pain remained.

"I know not in what thou hast sinned against me or my house; but thou art forgiven. Thy penance has ended. Brother, go in peace."

Barath and Girbur Gulab passed on in silence. At the Suttee Garden beyond the southern city gate, and a mile from the palace, they paused a moment. Barath had not visited the Garden for ten years. It was full of altars dedicated to the women who had died in suttee. Near the entrance was the principal altar under a marble canopy. The inscription on the altar was in letters of gold, still shining bright, protected from rain by the canopy.

"Bow to the will of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva.

"In the year of prosperity 1858 of the Samvat

(A.D. 1802), when the winter sun was in the south in the month of Maag (January) on the third day of the dark side of the moon,

“ Obtained to the feet of God Rajah Vikram Singh of Vikrampur, the forty-seventh of his line :

“ On the fourth day of the dark side of the moon

“ His wife Rani Devala, of the House of Barathpur, mounted his pyre.

“ Shri, Shri, Devi Devala ! ”

And the double Shri was to show that thenceforth she was not a mortal, but a Devi (goddess).

“ Girbur Gulab, leave me. My heart is weary.”

Girbur Gulab left his master. But under a peepul tree in the fields he lay down and waited.

Barath knelt at the altar and laid his head on the marble slab. In his tears he slept. . . .

An hour later the sound of voices awoke him. At the porch by the entrance two men were seated. He recognised their voices. They were Melnor and Vindara talking politics.

CHAPTER XXXII

ENGLAND'S PERIL IN INDIA

IN his heart-weariness Barath put his head down on the marble slab of the altar, to sleep again. But he heard words that aroused him instantly: for they seemed to point to England's peril in India—and he loved England.

It was Vindara that was speaking.

"It means that if His Highness goes to the Durbar, he will have to pay a personal visit to the Viceroy before or after the actual Proclamation. On all other occasions the visit would be returned by His Excellency; but on this supreme occasion, it is announced, it will not be returned. The effect of that in our estimation would be to abrogate the underlying principle of 1877 when Queen Victoria—upon whom be peace—was proclaimed Empress."

"I do not think the Imperial Government intends that," Melnor answered. "The sole reason of the inability of the Viceroy to return the visits is—as His Excellency announces—it would take too many days to return the visit of each, even if for a few minutes, from Princes who are friends and allies down to petty chieftains. Hence to avoid invidious distinctions, it is resolved to return the visit of none."

"I am afraid that from our standpoint the plea of

avoiding invidious distinctions is invalid. The rulers of States possessing a treaty as 'friend and ally' are automatically distinguished from those not possessing such a treaty."

"Nevertheless in actual practice if a line were drawn somewhere and the distinction carried out, the chief ones among the rulers left unvisited might be justified in regarding themselves slighted. Which would be undiplomatic."

"So, to be diplomatic, the Viceroy intends to slight *all* of them!" Vindara exclaimed. "I must inform you that we have to look at it in that light. Would His Excellency be truly diplomatic? Then let him return *all* the visits. Lord Lytton did that at the Proclamation of 1877, under Lord Beaconsfield's direction. Hence our charge that it is now intended to abrogate the underlying principle of 1877. There is no answer to that. I have no cause to be particularly friendly to the British Government, but in this case I am giving friendly warning. Unless His Excellency modifies his intention he will, no doubt unconsciously, *imperil the honour of England and the future well-being of India*. Do you know what will be said of His Excellency's real intention?"

"I do not," Melnor answered. "But I should like to know."

"That whereas the Durbar could be made the opportunity for securing once for all the love and loyalty and ardent devotion of all India to England, Princes and people alike, it will be used instead to manifest the might of England as unquestionably the Paramount Power. Petty chieftains from the frontier and the remotest parts will come to Delhi and be awed, saying,

‘ Is this the Power which we had the temerity to fight ? ’ They will see the Sovereign Princes placed on the same level as themselves, and thus will note the supreme position of the Paramount Power even over them. And the Sovereign Princes—as Beaconsfield designated them—will see themselves reduced to the condition of vassals. Towards Queen Victoria and the Throne of England they indeed entertain a feeling of the deepest devotion and reverence, won by love alone, albeit Sovereigns in their own States. Now instead the Viceroy intends to manifest the might of England by overawing them and making them vassals. By tearing up their treaties.”

“ That is a severe term to use,” Melnor commented. “ Is it just ? ”

“ It fits the action ; the denial of the return visit is not a trivial matter in our estimation, but a change in the basic principle of relationship. . . . So much for the Princes : now for British India. In British India we are very jealous of the rights and privileges of the Sovereign Princes, which we yearn to see preserved inviolate ; for the Sovereign Princes are the only relics we have of our former independence. Hence the Viceroy’s action will not only arouse the bitterest resentment in the matter of the Princes, but will arouse a suspicion that once more you are breaking your promises. The promises of 1858, made by a noble Queen, have been broken by her ministers. Now you intend to abrogate the principle of 1877. It will be enough. The suspicion will become a certainty. And the result will surprise you. The seeds of extensive discontent, unrest, sedition, call it what you will, will be sown and will fructify most rapidly. You think you are reclining

on Vallombrosa ? In reality you are lying in torpor on Vesuvius, and will not be roused into wakefulness till the actual lava begins to roll down on you. The East India Company heard rumblings before the Mutiny, but continued in a drunken torpor, refusing to awake and amend its deeds. You are now doing the same. You boast about your wonderful rule in India, too blind to see that you are kept here by our docility, our peacefulness, our mildness—which may end to-morrow. The mild Hindu has been mild for a thousand years, but to convert him into a fierce warrior and make him die for his country it will need exactly thirteen minutes—just so long as it takes a priest to revive the old doctrine of the *Mahabharata* and read the chapter to the mild Hindu. The marvel is, not your wonderful capacity for ruling, but your extraordinary capacity for blundering. During the South African War India was the loyalest part of the Empire—and now in a few short years you have turned it into a hot-bed of sedition. You have committed some blunder unusually colossal.”

Vindara thought a moment, then continued, “You will grant nothing, till you are compelled to do so. You forget that *just demands unsatisfied increase and beget others that may not all be just*. You have it so in England. I know something of Socialism in England—to my cost. Ten years ago its wildest and final demand was the nationalisation of land, railways, and the instruments of production; but some few of its minor demands were just. You did not grant them. Consequence: the present advanced section among British Socialists scorn to be satisfied with the nationalisation of land, railways, and the instruments of industry—regarding it merely as a disguised form of Capitalism, that is, as State Capitalism.

"I once saw a Lancashire Socialist haranguing a multitude of Lancashire and Yorkshire unemployed, dour men who said nothing, but looked dour. I felt that in a Revolution I would rather take my chance with a Paris mob than with these dour men.

"Do you realise what would happen if you lost India? Your chief industry, cotton manufacture, is an artificial industry at every stage; in the weaving-rooms, to make the yarn hold, you have actually to create a tropical atmosphere by steaming the rooms—and women and growing girls have to work there in deshabelle with the men. And this colossal industry feeds completely or partially ten million people in Great Britain, who have to rely on India as their chief buyer. Even a slight decrease in the Indian trade makes all the difference between profit and loss—and there are extensive strikes and lock-outs, and starving children, bare-footed and in tatters, shivering in the snow, searching for a cast-away crust of bread. But if you lost India altogether? If a million dour and starving north-countrymen marched down on London and sacked it? . . . Enough—I have warned you too much. Perhaps my coming to you has been a treason to my salt."

Vindara departed citywards. Melnor returned to the palace, deep in thought. The next morning he sent a cablegram to his friend in the British Cabinet to hasten his appointment to the Residency at Barathpur.

Barath arose from the altar. "No, not treason," he said, "but true friendship." Of the graver perils to the British, which Vindara had hinted at, Barath knew nothing, but there was sufficient peril in the Viceroy's intention at the coming Durbar. Barath was glad that

he heard of it thus ; for had it been broken to him personally by the Political Agent or Melnor, however gently, it would have caused the deepest humiliation—just because he loved England. His one hope was that Vindara's information was incorrect.

Barath took Girbur Gulab and went back to the palace. Meanwhile let us follow Vindara. His object was merely to make a detour of the fields, before turning back to his apartments, lest Melnor were seen with him.

Under a mango-tope he passed by shadows. He made a further detour ; but the shadows seemed to follow him. Nearer and nearer they came ; one of them detached itself from the rest and came swiftly onwards. Vindara put himself on his guard. In seeing Melnor had he unwittingly offended some cause, some scheme, of which he knew nothing ?

But coming swiftly, the man held out both hands—which meant friendship. A cry arose to Vindara's lips—

“Naren ? Thou here ?”

For it was his younger brother whom he had left in his home in Calcutta as a lad of twenty, and had not seen for five years. And now the lad was a man of twenty-five.

“Hush ! Not Naren—but No. 11 !” Naren whispered as he embraced Vindara. “Let me introduce the brotherhood.” The other men came up at his call. “This is Brother No. 4. This is Brother No. 5. This 7, and this 16.”

Vindara understood. They were members of some secret society, and had learnt their methods from Europe. A grave misgiving came to him. They might be capable of any folly, and might even imperil his own mission in Barathpur.

"Why are you here?" he asked them.

"For the cause of the Motherland," they answered together, as if repeating a watchword.

Then Naren broke out impetuously. He was the visionary among them, and had read the life of Andreas Hofer.

"The cause of the Motherland first, but thy cause also. It was in brooding over thy cause that I felt the larger cause of the Motherland. Dost remember when thou didst return to India penniless, having consumed thy property in trying to enter the service of the British?"

"That is my cause of enmity against the British, not thine," Vindara answered.

"I have one far greater!" Naren cried. His eyes shone. "I was born at Wimbledon—and they took me to a Christian church and called me Emmanuel. What reparation can I make?"

"It was not thy sin, nor thy parents'—but thy misfortune," Vindara corrected. For on the death of the parents the child had been left to the care of guardians.

"Then to do *prascheeth* (reparation) for the misfortune I must await a new incarnation. Thus my life is forfeited in this. How can I immolate it, save in the cause of the Motherland?"

Every cause, just or unjust, wise or unwise, has martyrs. But Vindara loved his brother.

"Hast resolved to sacrifice thy life? But to what avail? Thy sacrifice may not advance the cause of the Motherland."

"It will—even by setting an example to others," Naren answered, closing his eyes dreamily. To be the first martyr in a cause was glory enough.

“And the sacrifice of the others, all included—what will they avail? The British Government will go on as ever.”

“It will call the attention of the British public to our cause. Thou didst once say that our sole hope lay in that.”

“Not so long as they are led by their newspapers,” Vindara answered. “The newspapers will tell them that your hostility to the Government is hostility to Britain.”

“Then it shall be to Britain—if the British public believe that.”

“Thou wilt bring down the hand of repression most heavily.”

Naren laughed. “How repress men who have resolved to die—men to whom death is but a passing change, men who hope to be born again and die in the self-same cause? Our funeral pyres will be a beacon that will illumine the earth from incarnation to incarnation.”

Vindara realised that further argument was useless. “But why hast thou come to me? If to see my face I am glad. If otherwise, what is thy purpose?”

“Our house in Calcutta is in thy name,” Naren said; “I wish to use it with my comrades.”

“My house is thy house,” Vindara answered; “my permission is not needed.”

“We seek to make alterations, to adapt it for use as a college.”

“What wouldst thou have there taught?”

“History, economics, social science, chemistry and physical science,” Naren answered. “The House of the Serpent Gem contains their symbol in its very name.”

Verily the serpent was the emblem of wisdom, and the fabled gem upon its hood a lamp of learning. But the serpent was also the emblem of silence, of secrecy : also the guardian of royalty, wherefore the emblem of patriotism.

But the name having been chosen many years before, Vindara saw no present significance in it. "Thou hast my permission to use it as a college," he said simply.

Then Naren drew him aside. "Some of our instructors are Japanese," he said tentatively.

"That may well be," Vindara answered. "We also have Japanese instructors in Barathpur, especially in the army ; they teach jiu-jitsu to the soldiery."

"They teach us likewise. And many other things besides."

"Even that is reasonable. We also have instructors in other departments, for the Japanese are clever men. In our iron-works, now managed by Nishi Kashe, there are experts from Osaka."

"I have been talking to the chief of the jiu-jitsu instructors among us," Naren continued. "I was surprised to discover that he holds the rank of a colonel in the Japanese army. Kaneko is his name."

"Which shows how self-sacrificing the Japanese are. Though a colonel, Kaneko is willing to teach us the wisdom of his country ; for jiu-jitsu makes a man of the lowest wreck of humanity."

"True indeed. Yet, I understand, there are other countrymen of his in India for other purposes."

"That also is intelligible," Vindara replied. "In benefiting us they naturally seek to benefit themselves. I can guess that there are in India Japanese commercial agents to capture our markets for their manufactures.

They have captured all the match supply for India in four years ; so why not other needs of ours ? ”

Then Naren ventured on a more explicit statement. “ Japan feels that she will soon be forced for her very existence to undertake a war with a great European Power—the Power whose name has dominated half of Europe. In essence, the conflict will be one between Europe and Asia, and in it Japan seeks the sympathy of Asia. By Asia I mean chiefly China and India. That is why many Japanese are in India to-day.”

“ In that conflict Japan will have the sympathy of England also.”

“ Yes, but not in the same manner. These Japanese emissaries in India desire to know how we would take their possible victory or defeat. If victorious, they would be willing to teach us their methods. Dost understand ? ”

“ Perhaps I do. Perhaps I do not.”

“ It does not matter if either, for thou hast no official position in Barathpur. Still it will interest thee to know that Nishi’s chief assistant happens to be Kaneko’s brother. I have a pass to go over the iron-works with Kaneko’s brother. The pass was countersigned by the High Priest when he was dewan. That is one reason why I am here.”

At the mention of Vashista’s name Vindara started. “ So there are wheels within wheels ? ” he said.

“ Aye, and wheels within them,” Naren answered, and vanished in the dark with his comrades.

Vindara turned to his apartments in sadness. . . . And all the rage and anger and hatred could have been avoided by a little tact, a little wisdom, a little forgiveness—on both sides.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HAND OF FATE

ON the morrow the artist, the poet, and the pundits came to the palace. It was the day of public audience. Seated upon the throne once a month, Barath's ancestors had been accessible to their humblest subjects. Barath now revived the practice.

To the poet he said, "I am no Prithiraj, but thou shalt be my Chand.¹ Write me a new Book of Kings, or if thou wilt, a book of wisdom. Meanwhile, lest thou dost suffer want, our treasury shall pay thee a gold mohur for each stanza of original verse of merit thou hast composed: further, the city Harkora (giver of news) shall announce the commission we have given thee, so that our thakurs may give thee others."

To the artist, "We have no time yet to spare to sit for our portrait, but if thou hast painted little children our treasury will buy five of the best for fifty pieces of gold and fifty of silver for each." A sudden emotion surged over Barath's heart. He closed his eyes, and his arms curled round on either side over his knees. "And if thou hast one of a boy-child and another of a girl-child, each not more than of four or five years of

¹ The greatest of Hindu bards, attached to the court of Prithiraj the last and greatest of the Hindu Emperors of Delhi.

age, and so well done that one could imagine himself to be their father—aye, holding them in his arms, yearning for fatherhood—we shall buy each for a thousand pieces of gold and of silver.”

To the pundits, “And you, learned Sirs, search our archives—the ancient chronicles of our Court—and bring to light their hidden gems. Your reward shall be above gold and silver; but dwell in our palace, and the master of our household shall provide for your wants. And on days of ceremonies you shall stand forth and proclaim what our ancient customs decree.”

Then other artists and workers came forth, and laid their works at Barath's feet. To each he gave reward, and hope and encouragement to those that were truly skilled. But for those that were unskilled—though they knew not of it—he took the advice of counsellors and bade the workers turn their thoughts to other lines. For it was better to be a good crossing-sweeper than a bad poet.

Thus Barath ruled. Verily he was now truly an Eastern, fulfilling all the traditions of his house. To go one step farther, if all his people could not reach him, he would reach them. He bought a motor-car, like Melnor's, with an expert chauffeur from Bombay, and visited the remotest parts of his kingdom. Without notice or warning, with only the chauffeur at the wheel and Moolraj and one other beside him, he would enter a village or small town far away, summon the headmen, and hear the cause of the humblest claimant.

Then two pieces of news came to him. The first caused him much pleasure. The Residency at Barathpur had remained vacant since his father's reign, the Political Agent for the province doing the special

work of a Resident on the rare occasions so far needed. Now he heard with joy that his friend, Lord Melnor, was appointed British Resident at Barathpur.

The second tidings pained him exceedingly. The final arrangements for the coming Durbar were now notified: and, as he had previously learnt, the visits of the Princes would not be returned by the Viceroy.

Melnor tried to argue with him gently, as a friend. But the deed was explicit enough.

"I am much afraid," Barath said to him, "that my councillors do not quite see how I can attend the Durbar. Pray inform His Excellency of that. Perhaps some means could be devised to excuse my presence. I leave that to His Excellency."

Melnor was in a dilemma. It was precisely in contemplation of this *impasse* that he had sought the Residency—first, to be able to state to the Viceroy officially that his action was distasteful; and secondly, if that course were unaltered, to be able to persuade Barath as a friend to accede to it. He had found the Viceroy unyielding; he now found Barath likewise. Melnor had no alternative but to inform the Viceroy of Barath's intention to remain absent, unless his visit were returned: an intention decided upon by and with the advice of Barath's councillors.

A fortnight later Melnor received the Viceroy's final decision:—

"If His Highness fears the opposition or hostility of his councillors or subjects in coming to the Durbar to acknowledge the Suzerainty of his Emperor, the Imperial Government shall come to his aid and protection, and shall send him a brigade of British infantry, cavalry, and artillery to act as a safe escort."

Which in plain English meant that if Barath were unwilling to go to the Durbar, a British army would come to fetch him.

“His Highness might well have been spared that,” Madhava said to Melnor. “In any case we must advise him not to go, unless, even now, the conditions are altered.”

Melnor was in despair. He inwardly felt that the Viceroy was wrong—as indeed any right-minded Englishman would, especially one versed in European diplomacy. The simple fact was that the Viceroy, having once come to a decision that he deemed to be right, expedient and desirable, for the interest of England in India—wherefore, he may have argued, for the ultimate interest of India herself—did not think it possible that there could be a point of view other than his own, other than the one that seemed so obvious to him. That was his mistake.

Melnor was powerless. He thought of cabling to his friend in the Cabinet to induce the Secretary-of-State for India to direct the Viceroy to modify his plans. But the whole arrangements for the Durbar had been already left in the hands of the Viceroy, explicitly and absolutely; and in the short month that remained they could not now be altered *in toto*. And to return the visit of one Prince alone would be injudicious.

“Then ask His Excellency to pray for an act of God that would excuse His Highness from the Durbar, and yet preserve the Viceroy’s prestige.” That was Madhava’s last announcement. “Go to the Durbar under the present conditions His Highness will not.”

Vindara gave Melnor a private hint. “His Excellency will not really send a British army to Barathpur

in so unjust a cause. Or there might be only Dr. Bryden left to reach the walls of Jellalabad." But Melnor missed the point of the hint.

What surprised him most was that Barath, with all his English predilections, declined even to discuss the matter with him, saying that as he must act according to the advice of his ministers, Madhava as dewan would give his official answer. When it concerned the rights of his State or dynasty, Barath was inexorable. Melnor could only hope for the hand of Fate to intervene in some striking manner, so that Barath's English predilections would awaken to life so intensely that he would accept the humiliation of the Durbar and brave the anger of his people—for the sake of his English loves.

Or else Melnor could only hope for the act of God.

He sent a cable home, but not to his friend in the Cabinet. A month remained. There was just time. . . .

Vashista was still behind the scenes, his hand working invisibly. The Viceroy was playing into his hand unconsciously. The scheme of the Durbar would be Vashista's opportunity—or, if the act of God intervened, his justification afterwards.

He said to Ramanand, "Read the *Mahabharata* in the temples to-night. Remind the people it was Krishna who first taught its doctrines. Remind them also that the Sikh, whom the British praise as the finest soldier in the world, was a mild Hindu tortured and done to death by the Moghul—till he was told that his religion bade him fight and die."

"We shall revive the old doctrine," Ramanand answered.

“ From Barathpur the message shall go to all India, carried by a thousand wandering fakirs and sannyasis.”

“ Aye, a hundred are already gathered at the Temple of Vishnu.”

“ Bid them tell the people to await our signal for concerted action.”

“ And that will come——? ”

“ When England’s relations with a great European Power are unduly strained.”

“ I shall remember,” Ramanand answered.

Melnor had begun his official task at Barathpur with failure ; his hope was to end with success—at England’s supremest crisis. By tacit consent he and Barath agreed not to refer to the Durbar in the interim. Melnor worked hard at the Residency, getting into touch with its permanent officials, though he still stayed occasionally at the palace. Now there was a particular side, the social side, to the life of a Resident that had presented a difficulty even in anticipation of his appointment. As a rule a Resident at an Indian Court should be married, so that his wife could visit and receive in turn the wives and daughters of the nobility, and if there were a Rani at the palace, consort or dowager, her in the first instance. But Melnor was a bachelor, and had no intention of changing his state. So in anticipation of his appointment he had written some months ago to his relatives, to find one among them who would come out to Barathpur and act as hostess at the Residency. He had so many cousins and grown-up nieces, besides four sisters, that he hoped one or other of them would come.

He received a cablegram in response to his own, and mentioned it to Barath.

"A niece of mine is coming," he said casually ; for in the absence of a Rani at the palace, consort or dowager, his niece's reception at the palace seemed to Melnor to be unnecessary.

"But there is Princess Suvona," Barath reminded Melnor. "She and her brother have been staying here for some time. She is like unto my sister, and will be delighted to meet your niece."

"I had forgotten that ; how stupid of me ! " Melnor said, with charming diplomacy. For as Suvona was not actually Barath's sister or his wife, Melnor could not have mentioned her unless Barath did so first.

"And as, I understand, there will be no other lady living at the Residency, Suvona will be delighted if she will come to stay at the palace occasionally."

"I am sure she will be charmed to be Princess Suvona's guest," Melnor answered.

"They could be together as often as they pleased." Barath pointed to the back of his study. "That door leads to Suvona's apartments, and according to custom opens from the inside, though not the outside without a key. But your niece's apartments will adjoin on one side those you now occupy, with a direct communication on the other with Suvona's."

"That is indeed very thoughtful of you."

A wistful gaze came into Barath's eyes. "No, not of me, but of my parents," he said. "Let me remind you. A generation ago there dwelt for a brief while in this palace Colonel Wingate and Ellen—your sister and my second mother. These apartments were prepared for them in an English manner, but with a direct communication between Ellen and my mother.

You now occupy Wingate's; Ellen's still await your niece."

"I did not know that," Melnor answered softly.

And memories arose in Barath's mind of Ellen and Wingate, and his own parents.

Melnor was glad that this indeed was the tie with England. Would that it could be strengthened within the month!

For the next fortnight Melnor lived on tenterhooks. Being the season of manœuvres, it was quite natural that a small British army should happen to be then encamped near the Barathpur frontier—which was only fifty miles from the capital on that side, with a railroad the whole way. If at the last moment Barath relented, he could leave his capital at midnight by a special train, reach Delhi the next morning, attend the essential hour of the Proclamation of the Emperor, and be back in his palace by night. Thus Melnor sent an earnest message in cipher to the Imperial Government, saying that if the British troops must indeed cross the frontier, they should wait till the eleventh hour.

Meanwhile the telegram from his niece on her arrival at Bombay gave him hope. Previously ignorant of India, and ignorant of his ignorance, he was now learning rapidly. Thus he realised the enormous power exercised by the women of the upper classes in India: wherefore that his niece's acquaintance with the wives and daughters of the thakurs would be of supreme importance in Barathpur. Verily an Englishwoman occupying an official position in India, and knowing high-born Indian women, could repair all the breaches made by the blunders of the men on both sides.

Fifteen days from any part of Great Britain to Bombay, sixteen to Barathpur, and allowing three more for the preparation—within three weeks of her arrival at the Residency, Melnor's niece announced a "Purdah" reception to the wives and daughters of all thakurs, zemindars, and officials, to be held at the Residency on Christmas Day, an exact week before the Durbar. The most scrupulous in the observance of the ideals of their own faith, the Hindus are the most tolerant of the ideals of others, and even adopt some of them and improve on them. To them Christmas Day was a moment of universal peace, universal goodwill, and the brotherhood of man. The high-born women of Barathpur would come to the reception most gladly.

On the eve Melnor took his niece to the palace to visit Princess Suvona.

But an hour before Vashista was in deep conference with Udai. Mindful of her hope, Suvona's brother had stayed at the palace since Barath's arrival ten months ago, with only short periodic returns to his father's State. His father, too, was mindful of Suvona's hope—nay, had not he and Barath's father fondly arranged their children's future when Barath was a lad and Suvona a mere child? Now Udai hastened back from a brief absence at Vashista's call. Vashista's first motive had been that Udai should strengthen Barath at the last moment lest he yielded and went to the Durbar.

But now a more urgent need was at hand.

"I like not the presence of this Englishwoman in Barathpur," Vashista said at the beginning and at the end. "It bodes none too well for the prospects of our plan."

Udai, keen in his support of Vashista's attitude in the matter of the Durbar, was totally indifferent as to the Englishwoman's presence in Barathpur.

"Let her make friends with our women," he said to Vashista lightly. "Dost think she will tempt them to unveil and play tennis and ride in motor-cars?"

Vashista ignored the levity, but disguised his true apprehension. That he should be apprehensive, and even suspicious, of every new factor that arose was quite natural: for he had staked his whole life on the prospects of his plan.

"Hast seen this Englishwoman?" he asked suddenly.

"Not yet."

"Then see!" They were on the garden side of the corridor that led to Barath's study. Melnor and his niece were just entering the public side. "She comes to the very palace—to visit thy sister."

"As it should be," Udai answered. "I shall just go and prepare Suvona—lest she be bewitched by this Englishwoman!"

Saying this flippantly, he hastened into the inner palace. But Vashista remained in the corridor.

Barath was at his writing-table, deep in thought. Mingled emotions were warring within him. The Durbar disquieted and saddened him, as an ardent lover of England. Here was a blunder for which there was no forgiveness. The future historian would arise and accuse England of perfidy, of violating her treaties: and the people of England, knowing nothing of the deeds of their representatives, would be astounded at the charge when too late. He was more jealous of the honour of England than the average Englishman who confounds power with honour. He would rather see England

just than England great, but above all he would see her great by being just. And now England's honour, unknown to her, was to be bartered by her representatives for a mess of pottage.

Personally he felt a sense of resentment. He should have been spared this humiliation. Had he not loved England more than his caste-brothers? Had he not suffered more, inwardly? Had he not sacrificed more?

Then the resentment passed away—resentment could not long abide in him—and he felt a sense of pity for the blunderers: they were grasping at the shadow and missing the substance, were losing the love that bound nations for the sake of the homage obtained by assembled armies: but the assembled armies might melt some day before larger armies, whereas the love might have endured.

In such thoughts he was Eastern, wholly Eastern: was confirmed in his Eastern mood once again, and perchance for ever. In yielding up the resentment he was Eastern; in the thought of the universal peace, universal goodwill, and the brotherhood of man, symbolised by the morrow, he was Eastern. Yes, even if the East ever possessed the greater armies, it would make for peace and goodwill and brotherhood by rebuking the disturber, the usurper, and the international robber. The East only sought to live and let live.

Then the utter hopelessness of that realisation filled his soul. He was an Eastern, but there was no hope in being an Eastern: he could do nothing, yearn as he might. His heart was filled with weariness. His head was bowed upon his arms. His last conscious yearning was for comfort in love. Suvona had bidden him go to Delini, whom alone of his own blood he had

left to love. Perhaps he would go to Delini, at an auspicious moment. Even now her husband was seriously ill: he would await a little improvement to make his coming more auspicious. In that again he was an Eastern.

He did not hear the sound of footsteps, and it was only spoken words that aroused him from his reverie. Hearing Melnor's voice, he raised his head; and seeing at a glance an English lady with him, he sprang to his feet, knowing that she must be his niece who had come to visit Suvona. He shook hands with Melnor, and picking up the scabbard of his sword with the left hand—which he would do in greeting any lady—he turned towards her, awaiting Melnor's formal introduction.

It never came.

In turning towards her with right hand extended, he saw her face for the first time. The scabbard dropped from his left hand with a clatter. His right hand remained outstretched. Both unconsciously. Had the earth reeled he would not have perceived it.

Her face had indeed altered, but not altogether: there was enough of the old memories to make the recognition certain and instant. A tumult rose up within him, of joy, of pain, of apprehension. Having yielded up Nora and all thoughts of Nora, it was she that now stood before him.

"Then you have met before?"—the voice of Melnor aroused him.

Barath instantly regained his composure. "I have had the honour," he answered simply, shaking hands with Nora.

"At Boscombe," she added.

"I did not know that, or forgot it," Melnor said.

A spark from an engine sets a forest ablaze, and upon a trivial paper may hang the fate of nations. That several of her nephews and nieces visited Ellen at different times at Boscombe Melnor knew, but not which one at any given time. As for Nora, she always remembered that she had met Barath, and that was all. She knew nothing of his feelings, not even that he thought of her. In coming to India to preside at her uncle's Residency she was merely glad that she was going to some place where she would not be a total stranger, since she had met Barath before and Ellen had once visited there.

Though neither Melnor nor Nora knew it, in that moment there arose in Barath, who but a moment ago was wholly Eastern, the crisis of his destiny: the crisis that was to determine if the destiny should be Eastern or in part Western. His renunciation of Nora at the *mantra* had been so complete, and his resolution never to think of her consciously had been so faithfully and honourably kept, that the possibility of Melnor's expected niece being Nora had never dawned on him: for he knew that Melnor had several nieces. But that very renunciation made Nora's coming seem to be like a gift of Heaven: for it had come unasked and undreamt of.

Was this the hand of Fate that Melnor had hoped would intervene and stay the march of the British army? Better the hand of Fate than the entrance of the British army into Barathpur. For there was no hope of the only alternative—the act of God. . . .

The door at the back of Barath's study opened from

the side of the inner palace, and Priamvada and Kamala, Suvona's maids-of-honour, stood veiled before it.

"Miss Beaufort, these ladies will escort you to Princess Suvona." That was all Barath could trust himself to say. But he followed Nora with his eyes as the door closed behind her and her companions.

Then a sudden energy consumed him. He must be steeped in ardent and incessant labour—to keep his thoughts from crossing the threshold of Eden.

He summoned Moolraj from the adjoining chamber, and said, "Come with me forthwith. We must go in the motor-car to some remote town or village; anywhere. Some place that has need of our visitation."

Two hours later Barath was seated in a tent, dispensing justice.

And in the corridor Vashista waited till Udai returned to him.

"My son, I told thee I liked not her presence here. If thou dost love thy sister, thou wilt move heaven and earth to get away that Englishwoman."

"Why fear her?"

"Because my own eyes have unwittingly seen something to make me fear—their meeting face to face," Vashista answered. "I could hear nothing, but the curtain was parted and I saw. And that was enough."

"How enough?" Udai asked indifferently.

"How? Because Barath's heart was painted upon his face when he met her suddenly. The scabbard dropped from his nerveless grasp with a clatter at his feet. In mute surprise he held his right hand extended for full three breaths, whilst he gazed before him, seeing visions of the past."

"And she?"

"She? There was confusion in her eyes. That alone betrayed her!"

"How betrayed her?"

"How? Wilt have it brutally?" Vashista cried in bitterness. "That they have met before—perchance in the toils of love!"

"Dost mean he is in love with her still?"

"Aye, and will move heaven and earth to marry her."

"Then why scheme further? Thy plans are foredoomed to failure."

"Art thou beaten already?"

"What wouldst thou have me do?" Udai asked quietly. "Scheme and plot and intrigue? Do I value Suvona so cheaply? If Barath will wed her of his own ardent choice and give her his whole heart, I shall be most happy. But scheme and plot and intrigue? I would rather that she perished at my feet—aye, from my own untarnished blade."

"There spoke a Prince of the House of Rama!" Vashista cried in admiration. "Now we shall win!"

On the next day Nora gave her Purdah reception at the Residency, that is, a reception for veiled ladies, who came in palanquins. Most of the high-born women and maidens could understand English, and a few could even speak it a little, having had English governesses. They were all charmed with Nora. Nora was unique. She had been in India only a few days, and did not know a word of their language; yet she conjured up a thousand happy memories in them all. Years before, in meeting Barath, she had heard of *The Annals of Rajasthan*, by Colonel Tod; and afterwards read it—which

probably ten other Englishwomen had not done. Now in coming to a Rajput court, she obtained a copy in London, and read it anew in the voyage to refresh her memory. Also a pocket edition of *Sakuntala*, feeble as the English translation was, and another of the *Bhagwat-Gita*; likewise abridged editions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Armed with just these five books, which she read in the fortnight's voyage, she made a happy allusion to their themes here and there in her conversation, their thoughts, their ideals. And the women of Barathpur—with whom these themes, thoughts, and ideals were a part of their very existence, as indeed with all India—were first surprised, then delighted, then fascinated.

Oh, my English sisters, the conquest of Indian hearts is so simple! Your husbands and brothers have tried for years to do so, and have failed: or perchance they have not tried. Instead you and they could do it in a fortnight! I am torn in doubt whether to admire the splendid virtues of your race, or to pity it for its blindness. . . .

Thus Nora's first triumph was complete. But, alas! there is the eternal equation of life, the eternal balancing between good fortune and ill fortune. Among the women that came was Chandra Sena's wife. Passed beyond the middle-age, she had borne her husband several children who had all died, save a little boy now three years of age. In her anxious solicitude the mother would not be parted from the child a single hour; so she brought him to the reception. He was a pretty little boy, as indeed all high-born children in India are till the age of five or six. He wore rose-pink trousers, a coat brocaded with flowers and green leaves, and a

yellow cap studded with gems. He looked a pretty picture.

In her manifold duties to her numerous guests Nora could not spare more than a minute or two to each, but she impulsively kissed the child and gave it a word of praise ; and afterwards in passing and repassing she saw the child's gaze following her with large round eyes and in response she smiled back and returned the gaze every time—which the mother noticed. Had Nora been in India a little longer, she would not have returned the child's wondering gaze after the third time. For mothers fear the jealousy of God Himself.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ACT OF GOD

THREE clear days remained for the Durbar.

Vashista had Nishi Kashe and Chandra Sena with him at his apartments. They had often been there before of an evening.

"The extraordinary estimates have been passed," Vashista said to them. "They are now on Barath's table. On the morrow he will sign them. I have laboured hard, through Madhava, to get them ready."

"Is the money I need available?" Nishi asked doubtingly.

"For thy present need there is sufficient." Noting Nishi's doubting gaze, Vashista continued: "In the six years of my dewanship I anticipated these things. Hast read the life of Alberoni? I have. Listen: I set aside rigorously all surpluses as an emergency fund, for three years; then half the surpluses for the remaining three. But the surplus each year grew so rapidly that the last three are equal to the first. That shows what can be done by vigilance and economy in an Indian State, and would be a financial marvel at Simla. At Barathpur during my dewanship an executive engineer—who in British India could send in an estimate of ten lakhs for a work, spend five, give one in 'commissions,' remit one to the Government as 'saved,'

and pocket the remaining three—would not have escaped detection. Yes, there are ample funds, for the present, though Barath knows not their extent.”

“Then how will he assign to me a sum without limiting it in amount?” Nishi asked.

“Simply. The portion allotted to thy works, as being the most important, is ear-marked. Thou wilt be empowered to draw upon that to the full.”

Turning to Chandra, Vashista continued, “Do not fear, if the fund allotted thee is less than Nishi’s. In reality a part of his is for thy needs; for he will have to give thee from his works or his purchases whatsoever thou shalt need. Now to your supreme missions, my sons,” he said to both. “Krishna prosper you!”

On the morrow Barath received Nishi and Chandra. He spoke to them in English, which of course they knew. But this was a slight variation from his usual practice; for even to those who knew English well, such as Madhava, he generally spoke in Hindi on official matters.

Barath could think and dream in English as well as in Hindi. Since his *mantra* he had schooled himself to think only in Hindi: now, since Nora’s coming, he sometimes thought in English, unconsciously.

“Nishi, I am delighted to see you,” he said in English enthusiastically, “and to commend your labours. I saw in my recent visits how completely you have equipped the factory, and how successfully you have already begun to manufacture tools and implements. But a final stage remains: we must have machinery for making machinery. Well, you must now import them, and as quickly as you can. As they are meant for use in Barathpur, not in British India, they are duty

free in transit through British territory by our treaty : hence the British Custom authorities at Bombay and at our frontier will pass them without delay if the cases are sealed at the port of embarkation, and the seals are unbroken on arrival at Bombay and at our frontier. See to it that they are unbroken."

"I shall indeed see to it, Your Highness, that the seals are unbroken," Nishi answered in English.

Barath handed to him the order on the treasury. "This empowers you to draw on the accumulated funds ear-marked for your purpose. Now labour arduously. Having seen to the successful inauguration of your works, I may be too busy in future to go into later details. But I shall rely on you implicitly. Be strenuous and quick."

"So quick that Your Highness will be surprised."

"Excellent. Start at once making the things we need."

"Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares," Nishi answered, as if repeating an old lesson. "Or cranes and girders, bridges and locomotives."

Barath was slightly perturbed. "I have heard that phrase before somewhere!" But not recollecting where and when, he continued, "Never mind. Those are the very things we need, if we seek to make Barathpur the most prosperous part of India."

He turned to Chandra. "I understand that the twenty thousand men under your command have received some training in the last six months. Now we can go further. Here is an act of our Council giving you full powers of enlistment. I am a man of peace and have no need of an army as a fighting machine, but I know its value as a school of moral and physical

discipline : for even three months in the army will make a man a better worker afterwards and a better citizen."

"I shall give every man in Your Highness's kingdom the chance of those three months of discipline," Chandra answered, saluting.

"I have another reason for giving you plenary powers of enlistment. I learnt a lesson during my visit to Germany. I saw little boys on their way to school stop to watch recruits at drill—men of all classes whom the sergeants did not spare the most rigorous treatment. Then it was borne on the little boys what fate awaited them unless they passed a most difficult examination at school—that if they failed, thrice as long a period awaited them under the sergeants. Well, we see the result. The fear of the sergeants makes every German put forth the maximum efficiency he can attain—and Britain feels the pressure of German competition to-day. If Britain yet hesitates to have some form of conscription as a national defence, she may be at last forced to have it for its economic efficiency."

Barath paced up and down in rising agitation. "I sometimes pass sleepless nights, thinking what will happen to Britain in a few years. When in Germany did you not notice a feverish energy, a ceaseless resolve to carry out some gigantic national purpose?"

"I did, Your Highness."

"Germany has already a vaster population, growing more rapidly than that of Britain—and she has the economic efficiency, which will mean in rapid sequence more money. Build what battleships Britain will, in a few years Germany could build more. It is the eternal law of the survival of the fittest, which is another name for efficiency. Well, we shall be the first in the

British Empire—of which I am proud to be a member, if the Empire be as it was constituted by Beaconsfield—to set that example of economic efficiency. But stay. See that you never have more than twenty thousand men in the standing army, as that is the limit allowed in our treaty with the British.”

“Never more than twenty thousand,” Chandra answered, “in the standing army.”

“Excellent. Now go to your duties,” he said to both men. “Don’t forget our aims and desires.” This he added as a reminder as Nishi and Chandra were at the door.

They stopped.

So far Nishi had saluted. Now he salaamed profoundly in Eastern fashion. “I shall not forget, O Prince of the House of Rama!” he said in Hindi for the first time. “Pins and needles, scythes and ploughshares—or cranes and girders, bridges and locomotives, and a thousand-ton steam-hammer.”

Chandra salaamed profoundly in Eastern fashion for the first time. “I shall remember, O Prince of Destiny!” he said in Hindi. “Clubs and dumbbells, trapeze and parallel bars—or jiu-jitsu.”

They departed. Barath stood still.

“This sudden change disturbs me”—the words rose up to his lips, voicing his thoughts. “Awhile ago they were like Europeans. Then in a single instant they become Easterns, to their inmost hearts. . . . Have they a deeper meaning?”

Then the thousand allusions, the thousand suggestions he had vaguely heard half-uttered by many around him all along since his childhood, were suddenly focussed together in his mind.

The Prince of Destiny ? . . . Then suddenly he broke away from the spell. "What am I—what am I ?" he cried bitterly. "The son of the gods may be but common clay !"

Aye, or the last of the House of Rama but a vassal subdued or hoodwinked, or cajoled out of his heritage. . . .

An orderly entered with a letter. It was from Melnor, sent from the Residency. It was still morning, and Melnor was at routine work.

"I have just received a telegram from Delhi," he wrote ; for the Viceroy and most of the Princes were now within a few miles of the ancient capital. "Perhaps it is better that I should come to discuss the message with you as a *friend* than communicate it to the dewan officially. There may be a *modus vivendi* merely as a friendly suggestion from me. I shall come early in the afternoon, and am telling you before in case you thought of going on a visitation to-day. I know that in your generous ardour and disregard of personal comforts, for the sake of your people, you may even be prompted to go to some very remote part of your territories and stay overnight to investigate further into anything that appealed to your sympathetic nature. Your sincere friend,
MELNOR."

Barath smiled. Yes, Melnor's friendly hand was trying to gild the pill. Verily he could go to some very remote part and stay the night, so that his councillors would not know nor care what particular small village he had actually visited. None need know if he went to Delhi instead, save the faithful Moolraj and the chauffeur from Bombay.

But Barath smiled bitterly at the necessity for the gilding of the pill.

At noon he went into the inner palace for an hour's rest before Melnor came. But the rest was spent in thought.

He felt a small hand upon his brow.

"Lo, there are wrinkles," Suvona said. "Thou hast worked too hard. Nay, do not speak. I shall do all the speaking." She put her finger on his lips merrily. "Thou art always steeped in work and anxious thought. Thou must be merry and gay at times."

He understood her solicitude. She was trying to cheer him. "Little sister, thou art always kind," he said, kissing her hand. "How can I repay thee?"

"Repay me? What payment can I want?" She smiled, but there was a little twitching of the lips that Barath missed.

"What return for thy loving care, little sister?" How easy it is to stab unwittingly!

Suvona clutched at her heart. "Love? What have I to do with love, or love with me?" She turned away her head. "Nothing—or everything."

"Why in this sudden contradictory mood, dearest?" She turned to him on the instant. "Because I am a woman. My heart contradicts my head, and my head the things I perceive with my senses." For in the last few days, since Nora's coming, she had noticed a change in Barath. He treated her as he had done in the days of her childhood, sweetly, tenderly, but also indulgently, giving in to her as if her words were whims and fancies.

"So let me change again and be merry," she said, "and make thee merry. Let us talk of thy guest—our guest. She is beautiful."

Barath kissed her hand again. "Yes, sweet sister," he said, with his eyes down.

"She is sympathetic. We were drawn to each other at once."

"Because thou too art responsive."

"She tells me that in England she was thy friend. A true friend I am sure."

"True. True indeed."

"Was she the one I told thee to seek out to be thy new sister in thy long absence from home? Didst remember my words of parting on the day before thy departure for England? Didst fulfil them? Look at me and say—was she thy new sister?"

Barath raised his eyes. "She was as a sister. She indeed styled herself cousin." In Hindi cousin was equivalent to sister.

"It is well. So in true friendship she conversed often with thee, because thou wert a stranger and might feel lonely——"

"Did she say that?"

"And so interesting in thyself; in the things thou didst speak of."

"Did she say *that*?"

"Aye. And so different from other youths."

"In what things?"

"In—most things," Suvona answered.

Barath arose, but subdued his emotion. He paced up and down in thought a moment, then returned to Suvona's side. "And thy answer, little one?"

The words of passion surged up to her lips. She checked the passion, but allowed the words to pass her lips—coldly, casually, as if she were stating an obvious truism. "All other men. In all things."

Barath looked at her. "So it may seem to my dearest sister," he said, kissing her brow.

She thrilled under the kiss—then broke away from him.

"Yet, I am not really thy sister," she said slowly. "I am Udai's sister."

"My caste-brother. And the sister of my caste-brother is my sister."

"That is not logic."

Barath smiled. Instantly he passed from the serious mood. "What has a woman to do with logic?" he asked lightly—thus seeking to turn her mind also from the earnestness in which there was peril.

But she would not be turned away. "Much. More than men. Except that we call it intuition—something knocking at a woman's heart and conveying the truth in an instant's flash." She said that in vague emotion—as if something might have knocked at her own heart.

"Thou art right, Suvona. A woman's instinct is often truer than a man's logic." Then having given in to her, he reverted to the indulgent mood, for her sudden earnestness was taking them to perilous ground. "But still that does not apply to thee yet, little one. Thou art not yet a woman."

He was fated but to fan the flame in every attempt to quench it.

She turned away her head instantly. "He still thinks I am a child!"—the thought pierced her heart like a sword. "He loves me—but as the child that once played with him and galloped with him."

She faced him suddenly. "But I shall prove to thee that I am a woman. I would be thy counsellor."

"And fill thy pretty little head with affairs of State?" Barath cried in mock horror. "And what counsel of wisdom hast thou to offer?" he asked laughingly.

"What my instinct tells me. A woman's instinct."

"There is something in thy mind," he said in sudden uneasiness.

"There is," she answered. "So far thou hast done well. The wisdom of thy forefathers and mine has avowed that 'the voice of a ruler is the voice of God': for the ruler that is seen and heard is obeyed like God. So far thou hast been seen and heard in labour. Now thou must go further. Thou must be seen and heard in thy majesty. Hold durbars and tamashas; sit more often upon thy throne and let thy nobles sit around thee—aye, let the people see thee upon thy throne from beyond. Dost know what is thy true destiny?"

"Aye," Barath answered instantly. "It is to combine the wisdom of the East with the knowledge of the West, for the welfare of my people."

"Verily." Then in exaltation she cried, "Verily thou art the one true Cosmopolitan. Thou alone hast combined all earth East and West, in thy own person. Thou alone hast lived four thousand years—in the ancient wisdom of the East, and the modern knowledge of the West. Thou alone may stand upon Gaurisankar¹ and embrace all earth in thy vision."

Barath stood still. "Something stirs within me! I hear a voice whispering into my ear, into my inmost soul!"

¹ "The footstool of the Deity" the Hindu name for Mount Everest.

“And thy destiny is—oh, that I dared speak it!” She closed her eyes, fearing to speak.

In overwhelming emotion Barath remained silent and still, gazing before him.

Then the words of ecstasy broke from Suvona’s lips. “See, see the throne of Rama! See the vision! A hundred kings lie prostrate before him! Dost see his face upon the throne—the Prince of Destiny!”

Barath’s heart was wrung in anguish. “And thou also, my sister? Cease, cease for pity’s sake!”

But Suvona continued in her ecstasy. “See him upon the throne of prophecy! The Chohan, the Rahtor—the Sesodia, the Agnikool—all bow down before him and call him Master! Hush—the very gods of Swarga come down to grace him—Indra at his right, Arjuna on his left——”

With a cry of mingled terror and anguish Barath sprang to her, and held her in his arms. “Cease, my sister, cease! Wouldst make me guilty of blasphemy? Were I to believe thee—believe that I have that supreme destiny—spend my whole life in the attempt to fulfil it, and then on my deathbed discover that I was but common clay—wouldst then doom me to an eternal hell for that sin of lifelong blasphemy? What am I—what am I? Am I not human? I am but flesh and blood! Wound me, and I shall bleed—withdraw the breath of my nostrils, and I shall die! What am I—what am I?”

Suvona disengaged herself slowly from his arms. “And there is but one woman on earth who can help thee to fulfil that destiny.”

“Oh, what mockery is this?” Barath cried bitterly. “What woman is there who can do that?”

"Search and find!"

Barath was answered. "What wouldst thou do if I found her?"—was all that he could say.

"I would die of joy. And barter my very soul to live." She spoke the words calmly, though her soul was on fire. She turned to go. "Search and find!" Then she left him.

Slowly, gradually, a new light began to dawn upon Barath. . . .

"Barter her very soul to live?"

Then a new anguish pierced his heart. "Sister, sister, sister—a thousand times sister!"—the words came piteously from his lips. "I wish I were dead! The pain of dying may be less than the pain of living."

In sorrow, with bowed head, he was going back to his study. Afar off he heard the rising murmur of voices and the cry of the guard at the watch-tower of the citadel.

"Whence this sudden darkness? It is but little past noonday, and the sun is still on high—the darkness is in my soul!" In sudden anguish he cried out, "I feel the world falling around me!"

For three days and three nights there had been silence in the palace of Pertabgarh, where Delini's husband lay sick unto death. Then on the morning of the fourth a wail arose from the waiting-maids, and broke the silence.

The jemadar of the palace dashed forth to the guard-room at the outer gate.

"The fleetest horse and the hardest rider," he commanded.

He handed a message to the chosen horseman. "To the nearest telegraph office," he said. "Spare not thyself, nor beast."

The horseman rode hard, urging the flagging steed. The nearest office was fifteen miles away. There he dropped from the steed, and silently handed the message to the clerk. The clerk, reading it, pressed it silently to his brow.

Five minutes later the message reached the telegraph office in Barathpur territory nearest to the palace; but even then it was thirty-five miles away; for only towards British territory had the wires been so far completed.

The receiving clerk had no horsemen, only *dak* runners. He said to the swiftest, "Canst take this to the palace? It concerns the Heaven-born. A white message."

"Ten *kos* (twenty miles) at a run is my daily duty, five going, five returning," the *dak* runner answered. "But if it concerns the Heaven-born and is white, I shall try."

"If thou dost fall and die, entrust the message to some Gandharva (celestial messenger) or his earthly proxy."

With that admonition the runner hastened. Daily, with a small packet of selected letters specially written on the lightest paper, he had done the twenty miles; now he urged on beyond that limit. But accustomed to the twenty, the sudden change told on him with increasing force at each mile beyond.

With bloodshot eyes he beheld the marble cupolas of Barathpur shining in the sun—ten miles away. His tongue was withered, but there was no water nigh. A

film began to form before his glazing eyeballs ; in it the vision of the cupolas faded, and he saw but a blurr. He longed to fall and die. But he urged on. Marathon runners ? Children at play. He alone with a real message—as at Marathon.

In his swooning ears he heard the clatter of hoofs. Through the mist before his eyes he saw a solitary guard, the first man he had seen in the last five miles. He turned towards him.

The guard returning to the city from his outpost, heard the jingling bells at the runner's waist ; but the jingling was not in rhythmic time—as every villager in India hears when the *dak* runner passes by fresh and strong. Instead it was irregular and spasmodic. The trooper paused.

Haggard and emaciated, with deep furrows upon his brow and cheeks, the runner reached the trooper, handed the solitary message, and sank upon the ground. But the trooper gazed at the envelope, for he could not read.

“The Heaven-born,” the runner said, and at the effort to speak blood gushed up to his mouth. “Leave me—hasten ! Show white.”

From the watch-tower of the citadel the guard there espied the hastening horseman, and gave the signal. Then Moolraj came down with his son to the palace gate.

“Girbur Gulab, thine eyes are better than mine. What sign ? ”

“He has a white scarf at the end of his lance,” Girbur Gulab answered.

“Which means tidings of sorrow.”

Receiving the message, Moolraj pressed it to his brow. "Tidings of sorrow must not reach him without my preparation." Saying this, he read the message and hastened into the palace.

But already the white scarf had been noted, and a murmur of words and whispers filtered through the palace. Vashista hastened to the inner palace.

Barath felt the world falling around him. He reached the study by the corridor. Even as Melnor entered from the ante-room, Moolraj came behind him. Barath saw anxious faces peering in from the far side of the corridor. Then from the inner palace he heard the sound of a conch-shell, low and long-drawn, and the voices of the maidens in unison. The death-chant.

"Heaven-born, I bear tidings," Moolraj said with quivering lips. "Prepare thy heart. Tidings of sorrow."

"Speak, my brother, speak!"—the words came from Barath in scarce above a whisper.

"Vishnu prepare and comfort thee! Thy sister Rani Delini is a widow. Her husband died at dawn. She mounts his funeral pyre to-night."

Barath stood still, stunned by the blow. "Delini to be a suttee!"

"You need not go to Delhi," Melnor said; "go to her rescue instead."

"No—neither Delhi, nor Delini!" the voice of the High Priest interposed.

Melnor came to Barath on his right. "Will you forget your English training? Will you let her perish—and raise not a hand to save her?"

Vashista came to Barath on his left. "Wouldst

scandalise thy subjects? Wouldst sanction a law—and break it thyself?”

Barath was torn in anguish. “My sister—must she die to-night? I have not seen her since her bridal day—shall I never see her again?”

“Your sole relative on earth!” Melnor added.

“Wouldst deny thy most sacred belief?” Vashista cried. “Thou shalt see Delini in a new incarnation!”

Barath turned on him. “Wouldst make faith a barren profession, without humanity, without love? Am I made of wood, bereft of senses, emotions, love? Have I lost my human heart, flung it away, crushed it, trampled upon it? I *will* see Delini in this life!”

“Wouldst interpose between her and her martyrdom? Beware!”

Barath flung down his arms helplessly. “Her martyrdom!”

Then a fear crept into his eyes. “Does she go to her martyrdom voluntarily”—a terrible thought leapt to being in an instant—“or thrust into it?”

He turned to Moolraj. “Answer me! Has she had the freedom of choice?” But Moolraj was silent.

“Answer me—has she had the freedom of choice?” But Moolraj was still silent.

“Then I shall snatch her from death! Quick, the motor-car!”

Barath hastened out to his sister’s aid.

Gazing at him as he went out of sight, Melnor said inwardly, “The act of God!”

Thus the message of the Viceroy he had come to give was never communicated to Barath. Instead Melnor wired back to the Viceroy:—

“His Highness is in mourning.”

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM

THE affairs of Barathpur in the year following the last recorded incidents might have attracted general notice in India, had not the attention of India, as of all earth, been turned to another part of Asia. The relations between Japan and Russia were strained to the breaking point. The anxiety of all nations lay in the possibility of a general conflagration. England had entered into an alliance with Japan, which was originally prompted by the ever-present Russian menace to India ; but what English statesmen did not foresee was that if war broke out between Japan and Russia regarding Korea, and if a third party entered the arena on the Russian side, England would be compelled by her treaty to enter on the side of the Japanese—though her interest was primarily in India, not in Korea : and then Russia might be tempted to threaten India to counterbalance her possible defeat in the Far East.

The Indian Government realised this at the actual outbreak of the war, and concentrated its attention on the Indian frontier. But the Indian Government may possibly have failed to realise—and certainly the British statesmen who made the Anglo-Japanese treaty did so fail—that such a compact would be regarded in India as a confession of England's inability to hold

India against Russia without Japanese aid : above all, that however much the British public might rejoice at the success of Japan, all Asia would rejoice much more ; for it would imply the awakening of Asia, including India, from her prolonged slumber. Russia was but an emblem of Europe ; and the defeat of Russia by Japan would be but the defeat of Europe by Asia. Such was the Asiatic view of the war : wherefore the Indian.

Thus when the first successes fell to the lot of Japan there were whispers in the very bazaars of India ; and when the successes continued, the whispers became spoken words. The East sees quickly the hand of Fate. When the news came of the isolation of Port Arthur, the ultimate success of Japan was accepted in Asia as a mere matter of time.

Regarding Barathpur's material progress meanwhile, it failed to attract notice solely because the revelation of the far greater material progress of Japan riveted universal attention. Still the advance of Barathpur was great enough. Its economic and industrial schemes were now in actual work.

"There shall be no famine among my people," Barath resolved, "no hunger, no want. Yea, my people shall be prosperous and happy." Thenceforth they would have enough in the seven years of plenty to lay by to sustain them in the seven possible lean years.

Thus he would be Joseph and Pharaoh combined to his people. That, he earnestly believed, was his true destiny. It was great enough, remarkable enough.

But it did not satisfy Vashista. "Thou art but Joseph now, not Pharaoh combined." He did not

actually say that to Barath, but implied it in bitterness : it was Delini's widowhood alone that had saved Barath from the humiliation of the Durbar. "Thou dost rule because Pharaoh has made thee ruler—not because of thy ancient heritage."

To Nishi and Chandra, Vashista avowed, "We must make him Pharaoh—before I die. How long yet must I wait ?" Yea, he had been asking that of Nishi and Chandra for twelve months.

"Wait yet a little," they had implored him, especially Chandra.

At the lull before the outbreak of the Japanese War Chandra had besought him for the last time to have patience. "Thou didst tell us to read of Alberoni. Wouldst thou as Alberoni ruin Alberoni? Wait yet awhile—till my Japanese instructors leave me. Should we embarrass them after their aid? Then wait till they are recalled by the coming war."

But even Vashista and his disciples could not anticipate everything, being mortals, and might have their hands forced.

After economic progress comes social advancement. Barath now resolved to accept the social reforms long suggested by the British. Since Nora's coming his mind had unconsciously reverted to the West, and he saw again with English eyes. She and Melnor occasionally came to stay at the palace, and sometimes only for a day's visit. On such occasions they would come to Barath's study ; and leaving Melnor with him, Nora would pass on by the inner door to Suvona. The two men had much to discuss, and conversed long.

But one day Melnor found Barath with the new

social laws. The vakil was coming for them. Melnor, glad indeed at Barath's sanction of them, diplomatically and tactfully desired to have no direct connection with them. He soon withdrew by the corridor.

Vindara had now received an official appointment at Barathpur as vakil, in succession to Madhava now confirmed in the dewanship. Remembering that Vindara at least understood the British standpoint, Melnor had been pleased at his appointment.

But Melnor did not realise that though in politics Vindara might have actually had some English ideals, in social matters he might be ultra-Hindu, ultra-Conservative, even anti-English. All along he had been opposed to the new social laws—perchance because of Vashista's spiritual influence.

He found himself speaking in official Hindi, not in English, when he came to Barath for the laws.

"Heaven-born, must they pass?" he asked for the last time.

"They must," Barath answered.

"I fear the people will misunderstand these new laws."

"Perhaps at first. Then they will see their advantage."

"The ignorant multitude think of to-day, not of to-morrow."

"We must teach them better."

"There may be discontentment."

"I hope not."

"Perhaps even—sedition."

Barath arose from his seat, and paced up and down, as was his habit when in thought. "I did not anticipate that. . . . But why sedition?"

"Because the new laws come under the cognisance of the priests, and they might tell the people that the innovations were due to English influence, which——" He broke off hesitatingly.

"Yes?"

"Might be true."

"Even so." For the reforms had been suggested by the Resident even in his father's time.

But Vindara had implied more than that. He knew what the priesthood would infer from Nora's presence.

"Heaven-born, I implore thee pause yet awhile. A few years hence——"

"No. If the change be good, the sooner it is done the better."

"That is exactly the English attitude." Vindara had in mind several enactments in British India on similar grounds. The proposed partition of Bengal was one of them. But he meant further that Barath's plea would be the very evidence desired by the priesthood of the dominance of English influence within him. "This haste seems so English," he said.

Barath paced the room in some inward agitation; going to the curtain at the corridor he gazed out. "I desire haste," he said, still gazing at the garden below. "My mind and heart alike desire it. What I have to do I must do quickly." Yes, thus alone could he keep his mind and heart from dwelling on Nora.

And then, as Fate had decreed, the door behind the study opened and Nora entered. She thought her uncle was still there. Seeing only Barath and Vindara by the corridor, she tried to withdraw. She fumbled at the door awhile. She forgot that it could not open from that side without a key.

Not seeing her, Barath and Vindara continued. Vindara was now filled with the deepest apprehension.

"The priesthood will say that the English have infected the Heaven-born with their character!"

"Cease!" Barath said, glancing at him over his shoulder.

"That they have bewitched the Heaven-born, and will lead him astray."

"Enough!"

"Will make him pass most foolish laws——"

"Thou dost forget thyself."

But Vindara burst forth in a torrent of words. He must enter his last protest, cost what it may. "Most pernicious laws, most unwarrantable innovations contrary to the ancient customs of our forefathers that will wreck the State, embitter the people, cause riots, revolts, even mutiny—then the English will step forth, accuse the Heaven-born of misgovernment, and administer the State themselves—which all along they desired in their perfidy!"

Barath turned on him slowly. Proudly, coldly, he spoke. "I have said it—thou dost forget thyself. The English are my best friends. And thou and the priesthood? What art thou to me?"

Slowly Vindara went down on his knees and prostrated himself at Barath's feet. Knocking his head thrice on the cold marble, he said, "Yea, I am the dust of thy feet."

Barath raised him up in his arms. "Arise, my brother, thou art forgiven. Go in peace."

Vindara salaamed profoundly with hands on brow. "My head be my sacrifice. Thy servant heareth." He turned to go.

“Nay, Vindara, thou art still my trusty counsellor; my faithful minister. Stay, let me consider again those new laws.”

Vindara put the papers on the table, salaamed and departed. Barath returned to his seat.

And Nora stood still, witnessing the scene. A mingled emotion was knocking at her heart.

Noticing her suddenly, Barath arose and offered her a chair. But silently she glanced at the papers. Barath handed them to her.

“‘Marriage Reform: Abolition of Compulsory Dowry,’” Nora read. “Please explain it.”

“It means that at present a Hindu father has to give a dowry to a daughter on her marriage, about equal to the amount he could leave her on his death.”

“A most excellent custom,” Nora answered. “If that prevailed in England many an English girl could marry who has now to waste her youth. Why change it here?” She looked at the second paper. “‘Amendment of the Joint-Family-System.’ Please explain that also.”

“The patriarchal system still prevails in India of grown-up sons, married and fathers of families, living under and subject to their father or grandfather, or the eldest male ancestor alive. The very custom that prevailed in Rome twenty centuries ago.”

“And a most wise custom. Inculcates obedience to parents.”

Barath took the two papers, tore them, and cast them into the waste-paper basket.

Thus at a word Nora destroyed the British schemes.

She looked at the third paper. It was headed “Widow Re-marriage.”

"That I hope to pass," Barath said.

"In that I agree," she answered.

Then in silence he escorted her out to the garden; Melnor was still in the palace and would join them presently. Barath was deep in thought.

"I am quite surprised at your advocacy of Indian customs," he said to her quietly. "I should have thought that you would have advocated English customs instead."

"As most Englishwomen would. But you told me once I was different from most Englishwomen. Have you forgotten that?" She laughed lightly, to turn him from seriousness.

"Not one iota." He was earnest in a moment. "You still remain unique among all—Englishwomen. All women. If I could say more——"

"Hush! Remember our compact!"

"To let our present friendship, based on intellectual sympathy and unity of Imperial interest, remain untarnished by personal motives." That was precisely their tacit compact; but Barath would have liked to mingle with it some element of their former acquaintance in England. "So be it," he added, bowing his head.

Nora noted the incompleteness of the resignation. "What more could you want? I understand your ideals."

"The one Englishwoman who does."

"Is not that sufficient?" Which did not imply a vaunt, but that her position at the Residency demanded the understanding of Indian ideals.

"Yes, as sufficient as a glimpse of heaven—from its threshold. Just sufficient to make me realise what is

within." For that very understanding of his ideals made Nora unique to him.

"The heaven of to-day is the purgatory of to-morrow, with most men. When they desire a thing, it is their heaven; when they get it, it becomes their purgatory. Women discover that to their sorrow when too late."

"True," he said humbly. "It would be presumptuous of me to think I was different from other men."

"You *are* different," she answered candidly. "You have definite ideals, and know what they are."

"Yes, I know with mathematical accuracy the exact location of heaven and Olympus and Valhalla—from a distance."

"Perhaps some day—in the future—you may—get there," she said hesitatingly.

"Oh, do you mean that?" For a sudden hope had dawned within him.

"Hush! I was speaking—in the abstract."

"And I yearn to hear it in the concrete. Even then it would be but a hope for future hope."

Nora failed to notice that she too had grown earnest. "Oh, but you are a man!" she said, with feminine impatience of masculine stupidity. "Can't you understand a woman's nature? Can't you see what you have already gained? Oh, but no noble-hearted man ever does in dealing with a woman! If she is interested, deeply interested, in his ideals, is not that sufficient—for the present?" Had she chosen she might have added further that even the hour of defeat might be but the prelude to victory.

"God bless you!" he said humbly, a glimmering light dawning upon him. "I shall be silent—with my lips."

"So let us dismiss the subject for the present. Instead let us be friendly and merry." She smiled brightly.

Instantly he caught the infection. He talked enthusiastically of his work. Yea, even in his merriment his main thought was of his people. His one theme that they should be prosperous and happy. Nora noted it.

"Prosperity and happiness—are they synonymous terms?" she asked.

"Don't damp my enthusiasm!" he cried in mock dismay. "Why, the notion that they are is so very English!"

"And you have become so ultra-English yourself. I believe you are capable of wearing secretly an English cricketing shirt under your Indian choga."

He looked at her. "Why, I do!"

She laughed gaily. "I am not surprised."

Then suddenly he grew more serious; rather that in the seriousness there was a touch of tenderness. They were in the garden, and he took her to a little flower-bed. He showed her a little portion railed. It contained a solitary rose-tree.

"An English rose," he said. "I imported it. And the soil beneath it is a part of England. Of Boscombe."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"I brought the soil when I bade farewell to Boscombe," he answered her unspoken thought. "I placed it here as a hallowed place on my return."

"And the rose-tree?" she asked. For he could not have carried it with him in his world tour of two years.

"I imported it when you came to Barathpur," he answered simply, with downcast eyes.

Memories of Boscombe, of her girlhood, surged up in her heart. Of Ellen, of Wingate—of Barath as a

boy. But above the memories there was a dominant thought, though unvoiced. What love was this, unrecorded of man before ?

"I did not know this," she answered softly. . . . Then a great fear filled her soul. A man who could love like that would need an answering love, else his love would be turned to bitterness.

"What is your mission ?" she asked suddenly.

"To unite East and West, and turn their conflict into concord," he said. "In that I shall need a companion who would counsel me, encourage me, comfort me. Where shall I find her ?"

"Read again *The Annals of Rajasthan*," she said. "It was you who first brought to my knowledge the lives of a dozen noble women, one of whom inspired eighty thousand knights to lay down their lives in her cause. There may be descendants living of those noble women—Princess Suvona for one. Are there ?"

"There are," Barath confessed.

"Then heaven may yet be purgatory ! Would one be wise in taking the risk of your meeting some of them afterwards, and comparing her with them, to her disadvantage ?" In the emotion of the moment she forgot to sustain completely the impersonal garb.

"Now you have proved my words !" Barath answered passionately. "That very misgiving of yours proclaims you the noblest of them all !" Saying that, he could say nothing more. . . .

Afterwards, when leaving the palace with her uncle, a little incident happened. She noticed a child playing in the garden ; a boy of four or five. His mother had come to pay her respects to the Princess ; but the child, impatient of restraint in the inner chamber, was allowed

to go into the garden for a little while in charge of his nurse.

He was richly dressed in soft colours, though differently from before. Nora recognised him as the child that had come to her first reception. The child likewise. He gazed at her with large round eyes.

"Pretty pink lady!" he lisped, holding out a champak he had plucked.

Nora understood a few words of Hindi. She knelt down on the lawn and gathered him in her arms. . . . My brother, when you see a woman kneel to a child not her own, I say unto you, reverence her. What though she knew not what she was doing or saying?

"Pretty golden boy!" she said in Hindi. "Thy face is the sun, and the envy of the full moon. . . ."

What though she knew not what praise she had given—that if an earthly mother had given such praise to her child in a moment of ecstasy, she would have afterwards laid her head thrice upon an altar in penance. Yet I say unto you, reverence her.

Barath was not there to warn her, and the timid nurse dared not speak to the great English Memsahib. So Nora kissed the child and accepted the flower.

With a new hope in his heart Barath now ordered tamashas and entertainments. He forgot that Suvona had first suggested them and for another purpose. Now he ordered them in the subconscious desire to see Nora oftener; wherefore the entertainments would be with English variations. That would be an emblem of the union of East and West. Verily he sought to unite East and West in his own person and in Barathpur. Was the conflict of East and West begun in

Manchuria, perchance to spread to Asia—aye, to Europe? Instead he would be the first to turn the conflict into concord. He would begin the union of East and West upon his very throne. What nobler mission could he have than that?

Vashista saw the purpose, and in it his own final defeat; total and irrevocable defeat. He did not seek the concord of East and West, but the elimination of the West from the East. But he would strike one last blow. He had not lost faith in Barath: Barath was merely bewitched. The blow would be at the witchery also.

“Now, have I waited long enough?” he asked Chandra.

Chandra’s eyes were then turned towards Liao-yang.

“Yes, now!” he said at last.

Vashista sent a message in cipher to Calcutta.

“Naren, the House of the Serpent Gem. Remember the telegraphs and the railways. Await the signal.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

CAST THY LAMP UPON THE WATER

TWICE in the last twelve months had Suvona returned to her parents, and twice had she come back to Barathpur with her brother. Her father still hoped that the tacit understanding once existing between him and Barath's father might yet be fulfilled ; indeed, it should have been fulfilled had not Barath's father died before he could come back to India. But Suvona herself grew despondent. Ever ready to minister to him, comfort him, counsel him, as a sister, she dwelt again in Barathpur—but with decreasing hope. The High Priest still tried to sustain her, saying that all hope was not lost. And Barath ? He was always happy to have with him Suvona and Udai, Udai and Suvona ; he was their brother. . . . And Nora could come to stay at the palace only when Suvona was there to be her hostess. Barath was unconscious of that motive. He was merely happy in having both Nora and Suvona with him as often as possible, though happy in a different sense regarding each.

But seeing the tamashas and entertainments with English variations, Suvona's despondence grew deeper. While Barath was in the outer palace with his English friends—Nora and Melnor, and others from afar—Suvona's maidens sought to cheer her in the inner

palace, singing to her with esthraj, saringi and sethar, wonderful stringed-instruments of dulcet harmonies. But these songs served merely to feed the flame in Suvona's heart.

"Kamala, sing to me Radha's song," she asked.
Now Radha was Krishna's wife : but her despair was great before she won him. Thus Kamala sang—

"Sweet is the gentle breeze that wafts perfume
From grove and lake, and sweet the sound
Of murmuring bees that court the opening bud.
But ah, far sweeter is my Krishna's love!
Go bring him to these arms, these longing arms,
This constant breast that 'waits his head to rest."

And Suvona thought of the eight years of her hidden love, and the two years of care and comfort she had given Barath.

Then Kamala sang of Radha's despair—

"A favoured rival revels in his love.
And I with pain and jealousy consumed
Gaze on the moon whose chaste and pallid ray,
That other lovers full delight affords,
In me augments love's fever—madness brings."

And the maidens round Suvona sang the chorus of Radha's maidens—

"Her mournful note fatigues the silent night;
Deep in her breast the quivering arrow lies."

Then Suvona arose in her despair, saying, "I would know my fate! Kamala, when is the next auspicious day?"

"Why, to-morrow, Heaven-born," Kamala answered. Being a young girl herself, auspices to her had no reference to affairs of State or destinies of nations, but

to love. "By immemorial custom the maidens of Barathpur will be permitted to visit the Lotus Garden of the palace adjoining the River of Life."

"I knew," Suvona said, "but in anxiety had forgotten the yearly day."

Then Kamala, who knew the secret of Suvona's heart and was truly her friend, whispered to her, "Shall I place a lamp on the River for thy life?"

In agitation Suvona answered, "Nay! . . . But if I could only dare!"

On the morrow, the Festival of Lamps, the Lotus Garden was opened to all in the State. A group of maidens came to seek omens of bliss; each bore a lighted *chirag* in her hand, a small coloured shell wreathed in roses, the burning wick floating in oil. They were all veiled, for the Garden was open to men also. As they approached the bank of the stream, a man hastened in; he bore a staff in his hand and had a bag suspended from his arm.

"By Surja, Chand, Karkata, and all the stars of heaven, try your fortune, try your fortune!" he said to them generally; they glanced at him and smiled. "Come, pretty maiden," he said to one, "the verdict of the River may be doubtful; but try thy luck with the wisest Astrologer in Barathpur. Thou shalt have a noble husband and ride in a palanquin fit for a Rani. I shall tell thee his name, lineage, and the exact amount of his wealth—for two pieces of silver!"

The young girl smiled incredulously at such good fortune, shook her head, and turned to the stream instead.

The Astrologer tried another. "And thou, tender maiden, dost look most sweet and romantic"—for

the veil was thin, and though it could be made opaque by being held in a bunch, the wearer did not mind an Astrologer noting her beauty. "Let me cast thy horoscope and tell thee of thy future husband, some handsome Kshattriya, a gay young cavalier, and tell thee the very hour he will meet thee, notice thy beauty, fall in love instantly, seek thy father and ask for thy hand, and the exact day of the bridal, with full details of thy wedding-dress, jewels, feasts, and admirations of friends—all for one paltry piece of silver ! "

The maiden laughed, and her companions likewise.

"What! you scout the Astrologer?" he cried in anger.

Then the multitude of men passing by stopped to laugh at the Astrologer's discomfiture. He scowled at them.

"You also? You will not have my happy augury? Then have the omens of evil! Thunder and earthquake, plague and pestilence and famine, tempests and torrents, whirlwinds and cyclones, perils from wind and water and falling stars—beware of these all ye that dwell in Barathpur!"

"Be appeased—be appeased!" the populace cried in alarm.

"Then show your thank-offerings," the Astrologer answered, holding out his bag. The populace put in small coins.

"It is well," the Astrologer said. Then looking into the bag, he grew sarcastic. "But how is it well? I see only thirteen coppers and three brass discs! However, they will do for my little boy to play with. Now gather round, my friends." He circled on the dust with his staff. "Here is Surja, here Chand, and

here Karkata. If Surja and Chand be in opposition, thus, it is well ; but if in conjunction, thus, it is evil ! But if Surja, Chand, and Karkata all be in conjunction, thus, it is most seriously evil ! ” In a deep, ominous voice he added, “ And on the morrow all three will be in conjunction ! ”

“ O woeful day ! ” the multitude murmured.

The Astrologer was satisfied. “ But here comes the Scribe. He may confirm my portents.”

Now the Scribe and the Astrologer were neither professional allies nor rivals. Each kept strictly to his own department, though each sought to appear first on the scene.

“ Read to us, O veracious Chronicler, the wondrous events thou hast recorded,” the populace cried.

The Scribe had come with a scroll under his arm, reed pen on ear, bag at girdle, and ink-pot suspended from his hand. He set down the ink-pot, and held out the bag, saying, “ Show your offerings.”

The multitude dropped in coins.

“ Only ten copper pysas, and four of them battered,” he said witheringly. “ However, I see that the Astrologer has been before me.” He opened the scroll, and read :—

“ Eighteen moons ago, all but a day, the Heaven-born went to the rescue of his widowed sister, Rani Delini, snatched her from her dead husband’s pyre, and brought her to this palace. Since then she has lived here in seclusion, seeing none save the High Priest. . . . Three moons ago the festivities began in the palace in honour of the English, and for the last moon the English have lived almost continuously in the palace.” The Scribe turned over the page of

the scroll, and continued, "Since then I have recorded nothing that is good."

"Tell us all, without reserve," the Astrologer asked.

"All! All!" the multitude added.

"First, the monsoon came too late," the Scribe read, "and the crops were withered. Then it burst in a torrent, and there was inundation. The great dam beneath the waterfall is now straining with the pressure. Last night the new light in the city went out suddenly, and the Englishman in charge said it was because the water was too high to turn the wheels. Then the people brought out the old oil-lamps, which looked like glimmering ghosts—and the people saw flickering shadows, without substances to cast them."

"As if they were the spirits of the dead!" the Astrologer added.

The Scribe turned to another page. "The story deepens. Chandra Sena had a son, a pretty little boy, his sole surviving child. Awhile ago, meeting the child for the second time, the Englishwoman took him in her arms, kissed him, looked at him yearningly, and gave him such praise as no mother could without fear and trembling. The affrighted nurse took the child to the mother, who has done constant penance since. Had the Englishwoman remembered what is written in her own book of Faith—that God is a jealous God—she too would have done penance to appease divine jealousy." The Scribe paused, and searched for the place down the scroll. "But yester-morn the child caught cholera, and died before the sun had passed the zenith. Since then Chandra Sena has been like one in a frenzy. He is now sonless, and there will be none to light his funeral fire."

"So that his soul will endure a thousand years of wandering," the Astrologer commented.

"O unhappy fate!" the multitude cried.

The Scribe turned back to the main narrative. "The priests have harangued the thronging people in the temples, and have warned them that recent events indicate a preponderance of English influence that will lead to evil—for the English have bewitched the Heaven-born. But yester-year he was saved from the deepest humiliation at their hands by the widowhood of his sister: yet now he is their closest friend. . . . To-morrow is the eighteenth moon from the day the Rani Delini, after the fullest preparation, was torn away from the final immolation: and the priests avow that unless reparation be made—by the sixth moon, or the twelfth, or the eighteenth, or the twenty-fourth as the very last—there are omens to point to peril, the greater the longer deferred. The Rani herself, in robe of white and unloosened hair, awaits the morrow—to mount the pyre anew."

Saying that, the Scribe closed the scroll. The bystanders were silent. Then they espied the Harkora approaching, the giver of current news.

"The news! The news!" they cried.

The Harkora held out his bag with the formula, "Show your offerings." Then looking into the bag, he said, "I see that my friends the Astrologer and the Scribe have looted you already. No matter, I shall repay them some other time."

He took out his strips of palm-leaves, each containing a few lines of news, and read:—

"The English party that came from afar for the tiger-hunting has departed to-day. . . . On the

morrow there will be a public audience in the throne-room."

"That news is no news," the Scribe commented sneeringly.

The Harkora continued with fresh strips. "It is whispered that at the audience an announcement of the most vital importance will be indicated or perchance publicly made. . . . Further, that the Englishwoman and the Englishman will sit beside the throne, at the right hand and the left."

The Harkora took out another strip. "Strange things are happening around us. Men pass each other, exchange glances, whisper a password and hurry away. The city has many visitors, Maharattas, Punjabis, Bengalis, and men from the remotest parts. They receive distant messages through no visible means, and talk of happenings afar off. Men in Barathpur live in suspense, as if something was about to happen here. The air is oppressive, as before a thunderstorm."

The Harkora brought out the greatest news the last. "The relations between the British and a great European Power are unduly strained. The British seized a merchant-ship of that country, alleging that it was carrying arms for the Mad Mullah of Somaliland, and, by way of the Persian Gulf, for the Mad Mullah on the Indian frontier. Britain and the other country are replying more angrily daily through their newspapers."

"Do the British say that the arms were for these Mad Mullahs?" the Astrologer asked.

"The British always call them Mad Mullahs," the Scribe explained, "not Mat Mullahs (High Priests).

Thus in sheer ignorance they insult the people of the East at every turn."

There was consternation among the hearers, then, as suddenly, they passed to a new sensation.

"Hush!—here comes Chandra Sena," they whispered. "He has donned the saffron robe!"

Chandra Sena passed them by, without a glance. They fell back silently and respectfully, gazing at him.

"Perhaps he sinned when he was in Europe," the Harkora said, "and committed forbidden acts."

"Or in a former life," the Astrologer answered, writing on the dust with his staff.

"Does he still believe in that, after being in Europe?" the Harkora asked.

"All the more," the Scribe replied, proud of his knowledge. "There are many in Europe who now believe in the reincarnation of souls. Some because it is the truth; others from a different motive. They do not relish the possibility, nor admit the justice, of an eternal hell after one short life of human frailty."

"Verily," the Astrologer said. "And I have heard that Chandra returned from Europe confirmed in the faith of his forefathers." He gazed at the long saffron robe now vanishing into the inner garden. "Chandra goes to the palace to plead with Rani Delini for his dead child."

"Here is Vashista," the Scribe said, looking towards the inner palace. The High Priest often walked in the gardens, but this day he had a special purpose—when the public were admitted.

"Great is Vashista!" the multitude cried as he entered.

"Show us thy power," the Scribe prayed.

"Thou art learned and shalt see it," Vashista consented.

"And we shall understand," the populace added.

Vashista salaamed with his right hand. "Victoria, Empress-Mother, is dead!"

"The Empress-Mother is dead," the Scribe answered for the populace, all salaaming.

"Beaconsfield is dead," Vashista continued.

"He is dead," the Scribe gave the response.

"Our Sovereign Princes are now vassals, not allies."

"Vassals, not allies."

"The British have broken their word."

"Their treaties."

"The British are doomed."

"Their days are numbered."

"See the handwriting on the wall!" in exultation Vashista cried.

"We see it."

"Three signs before their Empire's downfall."

"Like unto the Romans."

"First sign, they prize their buffoons more than their Prime Minister."

"The buffoons that amuse them nightly," the Scribe interpreted.

"Second sign, they have become a nation of gamblers."

"And seek to get rich quickly."

"So one out of every one hundred and fifty adult males in their country is a bookmaker."

"Aye, the other hundred and forty-nine keep him in luxury by their gambling."

"Third sign, they betray the future of their country for a present gain. They sell their naval coal to foreign

navies—to be used later for the destruction of their country.”

“Perhaps in seven more years,” the Scribe added.

“We must part from the sinking ship!” Vashista’s eyes swept over the multitude.

“And trust to our own raft.”

“Our own raft,” the multitude echoed the response.

“To-morrow!” Vashista held up his right fore-finger.

“To-morrow!” the populace muttered.

Then a messenger came and stood before Vashista. He was in civil dress.

“The password?” Vashista demanded.

“Jai Krishna!” the messenger answered, and whispered into the High Priest’s ear.

“It is well; go in peace,” Vashista said.

Awhile after a second messenger came. He wore a long cloak, which he opened slightly before Vashista in giving the password. The multitude caught a glimpse of some military uniform. The messenger departed quickly.

But awhile later a third man came. In civil dress, without turban, dust-covered, his shoes in tatters. He paused wearily at a distance.

Vashista advanced towards him. “The password?”

The messenger pulled himself together. “Jai Krishna! Bande Matharam!”

“It is well—all is now well!” Vashista cried in triumph, receiving the message. “Depart, Bande Matharam!”

“Remember the morrow!” the High Priest said to the populace as he too departed.

Then in the sudden silence a deep, oppressive feeling

came over them all. Verily the air was hot and stifling, as before a thunderstorm. . . .

There came an answer to their thoughts from the other side of the palace.

"Here are the English," they cried. "What omen do *they* bring?"

"That your sins also may find you out!" the Astrologer answered, waving his staff at them.

"Run, brothers, run!" the populace cried, and fled. They hastened out by the public exit beside the stream. The Astrologer, the Scribe, and the Harkora went after them, with less speed to maintain their dignity.

Melnor and Nora entered the Lotus Garden. None remained there now except the maidens; they stood by the bank watching their lamps borne away by the stream.

"Some local custom or superstition evidently," Melnor remarked.

"Showing that women are the same all the world over," Nora answered, glancing at the maidens. "We place wedding-cake under our pillows, they cast their lamps upon the water. The object is the same—feminine curiosity as to the future!" She smiled at the similarity.

"How do you know that?"

Nora was grave in an instant. "I have been studying local customs," she answered slowly. "More especially the last month." She added sadly, "I wish I had begun earlier!"

"I understand, my dear," her uncle said kindly. "Your purposes are always good."

"Sometimes selfish."

"Say, rather, prompted by sheer prudence," Melnor

corrected. "You have to decide for yourself. I am deeply sorry that, being a man, I cannot advise you explicitly as a woman could about your future happiness. I can only help you to remove extraneous doubts."

"I have none. My only doubts are—about myself. I cannot make up my mind as yet. It is all so strange, so unprecedented."

"As in a sense it is with every woman at the crisis of her life."

They had now turned a corner by a grove. Nora was inwardly stirred. "But this is so different! Oh, don't you understand?" She clung to his arm impulsively. "Do tell me, uncle dear, what should I do? Supposing something was being offered to me—not in so many words, but silently and in action—something that pleased me very much, yet something I was afraid to accept—yes, deeply afraid because it was something quite unusual and beyond the experience of all my friends and relatives—should I, nevertheless, accept it when the offer was actually made? I see it coming, coming—with joy and fear."

"Why not wait till the offer is made, and see how you feel disposed towards it then?"

"It is being made now, and has been these three months—made with a thousand tongues, a thousand eyes, a thousand deeds. It envelops me, permeates me and the very air I breathe. These entertainments—so necessary of course after the arduous labour—am I not in them, as if they were for my sole pleasure? Even in the constant labour for the people, their welfare is the sole object—but my moral sanction and approval the inspiring motive. What if my moral judgment fails?" she asked bitterly. "It has once. I did not

then know that if I wished to bless I must seem to curse."

"Don't take that to heart, my dear," Melnor said kindly. "Your intention was good and gracious."

"And my ignorance unpardonable."

"Has Barath said that?"

"No. He is blind to my failures. Hence my trial. He has made an idealisation of me which he thinks to be me. But I know it is not."

"All the better. Then you can decide for yourself if you have sufficient perception to know definitely the state of your own mind."

"Perception?—I have none! I am in mental darkness." She closed her eyes dreamily, speaking softly, "I have only just sufficient perception to be vaguely troubled by the consciousness that something greater is being laid at my feet than I can ever dream of again."

"And the temptation to accept it?"

"Is more than flesh and blood can withstand. If I accept it and find happiness, I might be thrice blessed among women; but if unhappiness by some strange chance, I might still pose as a martyr, an English martyr, even if only inwardly. Don't you understand how? You have always called me a strange girl. Perhaps I am: for I foresee the awakening of the East. Hence the temptation to weave one more tie with the East—for England's sake."

Verily, even as Suvona's motive for loving Barath was unique, Nora's temptation to accept his love was unique. What a destiny for Barath even in that!

"True," Melnor answered, thinking awhile. "If there were two more men like Barath in all India,

India would not be an occasional source of anxiety to England, but a tower of strength. But you are not called upon to take the risk of sacrificing yourself for your country's sake. You must decide solely in view of your personal happiness."

But it was precisely because there was no obligation to take the risk of sacrificing herself for her country's sake, but merely the power to do so, that made her temptation so great.

They encountered the Astrologer. He had returned, though the Lotus Garden was now empty.

"Would the Memsahib care to try her fate?" he asked.

Melnor felt relieved. The conversation had been depressing.

"There is your chance, Nora," he said lightly—knowing that the Astrologer's fooleries would amuse her and cheer her. "But I must not overhear. I shall stroll about."

They were now along a bend of the stream nearer to the palace. Beside the rising bank there was a garden seat. Nora sat down on it, and the Astrologer on the grass.

"I do not really believe in your art, but still I should like to hear what you have to say. What is your fee?"

"Gold from the rich," the Astrologer answered. "Anything I can get from the poor, from coppers to thanks."

"How do you reckon the English?"

"Among the rich—when they are abroad."

Nora gave him a piece of gold.

"I cannot cast the Memsahib's horoscope without full details of birth, but I may be able to tell enough to satisfy her." He looked at her right hand carefully.

"At the present moment the Memsahib is standing before two cross-roads that lead to places a world apart."

"East and West"—the thought arose in Nora's mind.

"She is unable to decide which road to take—nor can I. But I can show what each leads to." He took out a hand-mirror from his bag and gave it to her.

"But I see nothing," she said, looking at it. "Not even my own face. It is not a mirror; merely a convex glass with a plain opaque back."

"The Memsahib sees nothing because her mind is blank. Let her close her eyes till her mind is at rest, then see."

Nora lay back in the seat awhile. She felt her senses being lulled to rest; then gradually her vision seemed to return, as with half-opened eyes she gazed dreamily into the mirror. Her hearing also.

"An old English mansion!" she said, with lips that were but slightly parted. "Parks around it. Ivy upon a dismantled tower. The sound of children's laughter in my ear!"

"That is the end of one road," the Astrologer said. Nora seemed to awake at the words. She opened her eyes full. The mirror was blank again.

"And the other?" she asked.

"Look again."

She did so. But the time for the repose was much longer.

"Black lowering clouds!"—the words came from her half-parted lips in scarce above a whisper. "Thunder, and earthquake, and a falling pinnacle—with myself upon it!"

"Black lowering clouds—which is mental doubt and suspicion," the Astrologer said. "Thunder and earthquake—which is sudden disillusionment. The falling pinnacle with thyself upon it—take that as thou wilt. Thou knowest thine ownself best."

"I understand," she answered in sorrow. Aye, if a votary places his goddess too high in his temple, and then she fails in one small act to sustain her divinity, he pulls her down in the sudden disillusionment from the highest niche in the temple to the lowest—unjustly.

The Astrologer looked at her. He felt an emotion that was strange to him. "Memsahib, seeing thee enter I returned here to ply my trade; for I have children and must live. Let me see thy hand again. . . . There is something there that bids me speak again. Take back thy gold." He set the gold down on the seat. "I have seen the hands of many Memsahibs, but thine is different from theirs. It is the hand of a woman capable of becoming a suttee!" Which is the last word on womanhood.

"A suttee in death?" Nora asked in deep emotion.

"More. A suttee in life." He hastily gathered up his bag and arose. "Something impels me to warn thee—I know not what. Let me see thy hand again. On the morrow beware! Beware of frankincense and gold and myrrh!"

"Frankincense of worship?"

"Aye. And of love!"

Nora started. "Because it were unworthy?"

"Rather too worthy. Hence the peril. The peril of the temptation to become a living suttee and a martyr. Beware!"

The Astrologer departed. But Nora still sat in the deserted garden, looking into her hand—dreaming. . . .

How long she sat there she did not know.

“ I have been searching for you ”—she heard some one speak, and awoke from her reverie. It was Barath.

“ Let me sit here,” he said. “ Do you remember how often we sat like this ? ” For he was on the bank before her feet. “ You made bouquets, and I tied the strings. Remember those days, those happy days, in Boscombe ? ”

But looking at her right hand, she asked, “ Have you ever offered frankincense and gold and myrrh to any one ? ”

“ No, but I hope to,” he answered softly.

“ On the morrow ? ”

“ This very day.” He looked up to her face “ Frankincense and gold and myrrh—and Sakuntala’s lost ring, and all earth besides.”

“ Would you compare her to Sakuntala ? ”

“ And Sanjogini and Savitri and Sita ! If you will in Western terms, Brunnhilde and Boadicea and Bernadine.”

“ If she falls short of their standard ? ”

“ Why should she ? I have only mentioned women whose equal the world has seen—if once in a century.”

“ But supposing she did ? Would you be disappointed and disillusioned ? ”

“ In my eyes she never shall. In her own she may ; but that in itself would be an additional crown of her excellence. Thus for every fall she imagines I shall place her still higher in my temple—if that were possible.”

What woman could argue with such idolatry ? In deep agitation Nora arose—and forgot to be impersonal.

Why not ? The battle with her heart would have to be fought without masks in an hour. Then why not this moment ?

“ Yes, I shall disillusion you—now ! Your words are sweet music to my ear. See how selfish I am ! Would you have more ? Then I shall *prove* my selfishness. Tell me how much you love her—while I revel in the thought.” She sat back and closed her eyes.

“ As the clock strikes each hour of the day I whisper her name, for the speaking of her name is a prayer. In the hours of night my lips unconsciously murmur her name thirty-three times, once for every celestial choir. If I see a new star I call it by her name, or hear a new music or read of a generous deed. For all that is good and beautiful is encompassed in her name. Does that please you ? ”

“ Too well. Now do you understand my selfish thought ? ”

“ The selfishness is mine ; for the painting of the picture is in itself a joy, and to pour out my love at her feet a bliss unutterable. Let me sum up that love in a single thought : her every wish shall be my every wish. Nay, more. We could all fulfil our beloved’s desire when asked ; but it shall be mine to think out and fulfil hers unasked. Can I say more ? Even this : in all things she will be my Aladdin, and I will be her Jinn—the slave of her lamp, her inmost thought.”

Nora ceased to revel. “ And such love as that it would be sinful for a woman to accept.”

“ Why sinful ? It is better for a woman to be loved more, than to love more.”

“ True—alas, too true ! ” Verily she felt that her love could never equal this. “ But the measure of a

woman's love is the measure of her sacrifice. That also is true. What is my sacrifice ? ”

“ Misunderstanding and conflict ; possibly lifelong conflict. Not with me, for that were impossible, but with your own countrymen. I am trying to be Britain's sincerest friend in India, but Britain's representatives may not let me. But armed with your aid I shall succeed. Then help me to be Britain's friend. Do you realise what peril awaits her ? She may awake some morning—and find India lost. These last twenty years the gulf has been widening, and is still widening—now.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because Beaconsfield is dead, and Britain asleep : his scheme of uniting Britain and India in the bond of love and esteem stronger far than triple steel bartered away for a mess of pottage.” Aye, the British of to-day were flinging away their Indian Empire for the pleasure of a passing conceit, for the pleasure of calling themselves rulers and conquerors—whereas they might have won India's love by taking her into partnership. Barath sprang to his feet in rising indignation, but checked himself.

He turned to Nora again. “ Help me to restore that noble scheme,” he cried passionately. “ You alone can, by strengthening my right arm to fight for it. Do you realise how ? We shall visit Britain every other year, and the eyes of the nation will be upon us and our endeavour. Thus shall we arouse the nation to the memory of Beaconsfield ; thus shall our alliance be but a symbol of the bond between Britain and India. Would you have more ? Then even this : There are almost a dozen States like mine in India

which together could put on the field a million of the finest warriors on earth. Britain could find the transports, and we the million men to protect Britain's shore. Aye, the day may be at hand when Britain will have to look eastward from her shore—near for the peril, afar for the rescue. Build what *Dreadnoughts* she will, her future enemies will build more—because already they have more men, and soon will have more money. Perhaps in seven years ! ”

“ And that is my very temptation ! ” Aye, it was now irresistible. For, added to the motive of a closer bond between Britain and India, there was now the thought of her country's nearer peril. “ Oh, let me think—think ! ” She arose, torn in conflict. Aye, but the time for thought was over, and only inspiration could aid her.

“ Oh, what temptation is this ? ”—her heart was wrung in that cry. “ When the peril comes to Britain from her eastern shore, she may have to look afar eastward for her rescue—and in that I may participate ! ”

“ Then take that as a sign ! ” She wavered, and his voice was tender. “ Come, dearest, refuse me no longer. See, I have exhausted your resistance ! ”

Yielding, and giving him the hand he sought, she withdrew it suddenly, and gazed at him.

“ But what are you ? What manner of man are you ? Not one word have you pleaded for yourself, but on Britain's behalf. Not one word have you asked if I had any—affection—in return—for yourself. Don't you want it ? See nothing in yourself and in your love to—merit it ? Is that man-like ? Is that human ? ”

"I dared not to utter a hope—for the return," he answered simply. "It seemed enough that I felt the love all the time. Yes, always." He took out a locket, opened it, and gave it to her. "Do you see your face there? Yes, I have worn it always—your and Ellen's gift. Besides your name in diamonds do you note the two Hindi letters in pearls? I had them set in. They stand for alpha and omega. Do you understand? You are the beginning and end of all my thoughts, my hopes, my dreams."

She was stirred to her deepest heart. With such love as this he had thought, not of her answering love, but of her sacrifice! Oh, but she had said it before—that the noblest men never see what they have gained in dealing with a woman. Was Barath the noblest of them all? She had yielded—and yet had to ask him first before he would utter a hope for her answering love.

"Oh, but are you like any other man——"

"Hush, dearest! I exult enough in being the slave of your lamp, henceforth."

He led her to the seat. Joy unutterable filled his soul. The hour he had long awaited had now come—he could love from his inmost heart, and revel in avowing it. Dreams and fancies of a thousand ways of manifesting his love and lavishing his tenderness mingled together in a kaleidoscope of the thousand aspects of his love which till now with a thousand mute tongues he had tried to utter.

"You have filled my heart with gladness. I could cry out to the world in my joy—but shall reserve it for you, all for you." He kissed her hand, her garment. "What a beautiful dress!—I never noticed it before,

But you shall have a dress of cloth-of-gold woven with stars and moons in diamonds and pearls. Yes, to-morrow we shall proclaim our betrothal. A new Ferdinand, a new Isabella. Yes, we shall discover a new world—East and West united. Would you want a new Taj Mahal to immortalise our love? Then I shall be your Jinn, and shall build it. A new Imambara and a Palace of Ten Thousand Lights? Then them also, to-morrow. For I have spread my dreams beneath your feet. . . . Am I incoherent? It is because my heart is full, and you have allowed me to pour it out in love. I could die of joy—and barter my very soul to live.”

He started violently. A sudden fear crept into his eyes. “Who put those words upon my lips?”—it was a deep whisper that issued from his lips.

Aye, Suvona. But not for thee to repeat to Nora!

He leapt to his feet. “Oh, what a hypocrite I am, what a hypocrite I am!” he cried fiercely. “I cannot pour out my heart to you, save in the words of another! What a hypocrite I am, what a hypocrite I am!”

He bent his right knee penitently. “Nora, forgive me! It was only a passing thought—and I hurled it away instantly. Forgive me!”

Nora gave him her right hand in silence.

“God bless you!” he cried passionately, kissing the hand. “I am forgiven! Thus we shall proclaim our betrothal to the world—on the morrow.”

Nora arose to depart. Suddenly she paused, trembling. . . . “On the morrow beware!”—the words flashed to her memory. “Beware of frankincense and gold and myrrh!”

Barath hastened to her side. "What is it, dearest? Tell me!"

She stood with her hand on her brow, then recovered. "Only a passing thought. See, I have hurled it away!"

Barath took her to the end of the Lotus Garden, where her uncle was. Then he turned back by another path through the Jasmine Garden. There from afar he saw something, and stood still. . . .

In the seclusion of the Jasmine Garden Rani Delini walked as one in a dream. She wore a long white robe, her hair was unloosened, her face unveiled. Swiftly from behind came Chandra Sena in saffron robe. He cast himself at her feet from behind, and tried to kiss the hem of her garment.

She put out a hand to her side to check him. "I am unpurified."

"But thou shalt be to-morrow." He kissed her garment and looked up in supplication. "Give me back my child! Give him back to me!"

"Thy child is dead," she answered. "I am powerless."

"Oh, what do I say! I am bereft of reason! My child is dead! But give me another! Another!"

Delini shook her head sadly. "I have said it—I am powerless."

"But thou shalt not be after to-morrow. Give me another! Plead for me when thou art sanctified. Devi, Devi—plead for me!"

"I am no Devi, but an unpurified widow." A sudden frenzy consumed her. "Dost hear me? I am an unpurified widow! My very shadow is contamination! Go, leave me!"

But Chandra would not be denied. "No—to-morrow thou shalt be a Devi!" he cried passionately. "Plead for me! Promise, promise—Devi!"

Delini relented. "I promise, my brother! Go in peace!"

Chandra silently kissed the hem of her garment and departed. Then Barath drew nigh.

"I am going to my dead husband," Delini said to her brother. "He is calling me. I see and hear him daily. His spirit follows me like a shadow by day, and stands beside me in my sleep by night. 'Give me light, give me light'—I hear his cry asleep or awake. I shall hesitate no longer, but join him in Nirvana—shall drink anew the cup of oblivion and surrender my lifeless body to the pyre on which he had lain. Thus shall I release his soul from pain, and mine."

"Poor Delini! Thy sorrow has numbed thy reason." For surely the vision of her husband was but fancy.

She turned on Barath. "I am not mad, but sane indeed. So sane that I shall accuse thee. Brother mine, thou hast unwittingly done me a grievous wrong. Is it thy fate to wrong unwittingly those thou lovest best?"

Barath started. "Those I love best? I protest it is untrue!"

"I had drunk the cup of oblivion, had passed through the conscious pains and perils of martyrdom for my dead husband's sake, and nothing remained but to enter paradise—when from the gate of heaven thou didst snatch back my senseless body, and revive it with thy English drugs and medicines: I feel them still coursing through my veins, impregnating my blood!"

Of that I charge thee. Now have I proved my sanity ? . . . But I forgive thee, brother mine. Wrong no more those thou lovest. Farewell ! ”

She departed. Barath impetuously rushed to her, but a hand intervened. Vashista stood between. He turned first to Delini.

“ Go, my sainted daughter—go to thy canonisation ! ”

As she departed the High Priest turned to Barath. “ Gather up her ashes in a storied urn and preserve them as a sacred relic that shall do miracles from generation to generation. Thus shalt thou expiate the wrong thou hast done her.”

“ Unwittingly. I did not know her choice was free. I thought I was doing right.”

“ And thou hast kept Suvona here—thy other sister, who is as a sister to thee—to act as hostess to thy English friend : to have the Englishwoman here oftener. Hast done no wrong to Suvona in that ? ”

“ Not consciously,” Barath said, his mind vaguely troubled. “ I hope not. In that also I thought I was doing right.”

“ True,” Vashista answered, then added a veiled suggestion : “ and there is yet time to make reparation—to Suvona.” Barath started.

“ But of that in due course,” Vashista continued. “ Meanwhile I have to correct thy mental attitude towards right and wrong. My son, I wish to warn thee kindly : recently thou hast become just like the English in India. They think that whatever they consider to be right must be right, all opinions and feelings to the contrary notwithstanding. They will dismember a province, perhaps sincerely believing it to be for the

good of its people, but will not ask for the opinion of that people first."

"But the measure itself may be right. What is right is right, irrespective of opinions."

"That is a European blasphemy!" the High Priest answered. "Since when hast thou adopted it? Only the Deity can know what is the absolute or objective right. A mere mortal's knowledge can only be subjective."

Vashista suddenly changed his tone and attitude. From being critical he became deferential. "No, I was wrong. My son, thou alone hast the prerogative of being objective. Be so henceforth. Dost understand me?"

"I do not," Barath answered in perturbation.

"Yet awhile, a little while, and I shall speak to thee of it in clearer terms. On the morrow. This hour let me prepare thee for it."

"What wouldst thou have me do that I have not done, am not doing?"

"Of that on the morrow. Meanwhile listen." He glanced round the garden. "In this solitude there is none to overhear us. Son, I have something to tell thee. Say but the word, and a hundred and twenty thousand men will leap to their feet to strengthen thy right arm. Even to-morrow."

"Dost mean to tell me that unknown to me I have a standing army of a hundred and twenty thousand men?"

"No. A standing army of only twenty thousand men. The rest are lying down, lying low—but will arise at a word."

"I cannot believe that. It is impossible."

"Son, if thou wilt read the lives of Stein and Hardenberg, thou wilt see how it were possible. We always had the materials. Remember our army of fifty thousand men less than a century ago, trained by the Frenchmen."

"But this new army is in violation of my treaty with the English."

"Thy treaty allows thee a standing army of twenty thousand—and thou hast twenty thousand, and not one small bugler more. The rest will come into existence when necessary."

Again Vashista changed his attitude. "But I am glad thou hast mentioned thy treaty with the English," he said bitterly. "What art thou by treaty? A friend and ally of England! What in practice? A vassal! Aye, a vassal saved from the last stamp of vassalage only by an act of God! So much for the sanctity of thy treaty!"

"I hope to change all that," Barath answered. "Henceforth there will be a new alliance between England and India, beginning from to-morrow—when I shall be strengthened in demanding the exact fulfilment of my treaty."

"Dost thou trust the English to do that?"

"Absolutely."

"Then read again the history of thy country! The forgery of Clive completing the conspiracy that won the Battle of Plassey; the perfidy of Warren Hastings; the perfidy of Dalhousie at Jhansi; the most solemn pledge to the Sepoys to withdraw the greased cartridge, and then to reissue it—wilt have more than that? Thou dost know the silent thought of all India—that the Indian version of the Mutiny has yet to be written

for the judgment of the world. Why dost thou not write it, O English-educated Prince ? ”

“ Because my heart would break sooner.”

“ Then dip thy pen in thy heart, and write in its oozing blood ! ”

“ I would ! ” Barath cried passionately. “ I would stir up the very stones of India to a new Mutiny—if there were no hope from the English ! But there is. I will protest with my last breath there is ! The tale of perfidy is now over and the rapacity of a Company. We have now England’s solemn pledge, and I stake my life on it—Queen Victoria’s Proclamation ! ” He bowed his head. “ Peace to her soul.”

Vashista bowed his head. “ Peace to her soul.”

Then he looked up and cried fiercely, “ Her Proclamation broken by her ministers ever since. ‘ Promises made to the ear, and broken to the hope ’—who has said that ? A Prime Minister of England—when he was in Opposition. We can get the truth about India from English Ministers—when they are in Opposition. Verily it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for an English Minister to be true to his own ideals—when he is in Office.”

“ Exactly as in the rest of Europe.”

“ True. Thy words are true, O Prophet ! I condemn all Europe. Blot out Europe, and what remains ? A smell of gunpowder ! ”

“ Be just. Art remains.”

“ Verily. Art remains—to minister to man’s passions and pleasures. Anything to give him hope and comfort ? ”

“ Why speak only as High Priest ? Speak also as man. If my right arm were dead and must needs be

cut off to save my life, it could now be severed from my body without pain or peril. Europe has done that for suffering humanity—aye, an Englishman. By the sum-total of pain saved in our hospitals may England's occupation of India yet be condoned—however unjustly the occupation may have begun."

"Thou hast said it! Do they yet admit their early misdeeds? Read their history books taught to every little boy and girl at school—and every passing reference to India from Clive to the Mutiny is a falsehood or a misstatement. Read also the books for men and women. Read the boast about a handful of Englishmen ruling three hundred millions. In that is there no credit to the three hundred millions—for their religious instinct, their obedience to law, their love of peace, their resignation to the Divine will; above all, for their belief that it is sinful to take life? Thou hast cried for justice: has it yet entered the perception of an English god, not a lump of clay, to do that justice to the three hundred millions? What if in retribution we revive the old doctrine of the *Mahabharata* that it is noble to fight and die for one's country? Supposing we teach that to all our youths? What if the three hundred millions awake at last? What if the four hundred millions of China also? They also have had the instinct of peace, and the desire to live and let live: what if they awake also, seeing the plunder of China by Europe but yesterday? Where will Europe be against the seven hundred millions if they are taught that their *religion* bids them fight and die? For them death has no terrors; to them bravery is but the profession of their faith in reincarnation, and to fling away their lives beneath the forts of Port Arthur a

passing episode in the cycle of existence. Then what if, combined with that new religious enthusiasm for death on the field of battle, the seven hundred millions have also guns, great big guns? Canst read the doom of Europe? Then read, O European Prince! Wouldst see the first torch lighted that will spread the flame to Europe? Then see—to-morrow!"

Barath understood Vashista's suggestion that if the British occupation of India came to a sudden and violent end, the westward movement might spread throughout Asia and even end beyond the borders of Europe. There was the deepest peril to Britain and to Europe in the revival of the doctrine. He made one last effort to make Vashista desist from his purpose.

"Father, I shall answer thee once for all. For the present it is essential that the East should be on terms of friendship with the West for its own sake. Are we fit as yet? Fit to govern ourselves in the best possible manner without Western aid? Fit intellectually and morally? Intellectually perhaps—among the higher castes. But morally? For seven long centuries we have betrayed one another for a selfish gain. How many true patriots are there in India to-day? How many that could not be bought by the British Government with a high office, a high honour, a high dignity?"

"Exactly as in England, where the Government represents the party and gives the honour for services to the party, not to the nation. Englishmen see the very devil in the opposite party."

"Nevertheless they all unite against the alien foe. We must wait two more generations for that to happen

in India. Then if the British are unjust, thy posterity and mine can drive them out."

"Dost think the British will become just to India in two more generations?"

"They must, when they as a nation plunge into Indian affairs and control their representatives. To-morrow or the day after. To-day German and American competition has begun to drive out British goods from the neutral markets of the world. To-morrow England will wake up and find India to be her sole monopoly market."

"Yes, touch Englishmen's pockets, and they awake! I suppose thou dost mean that then they will begin to take a frantic interest in all things Indian, compel their Members in Parliament to attend Indian debates, and themselves devour books, stories, fables about India, and flock to every Indian show or tamasha, be it even a circus, jugglery, or devil-dance!" Vashista paused, then cried bitterly, "But I know better. 'Take all you can to-day, and damn the future'—that is the English motto. 'After us the deluge.' Well, they shall have the deluge of their choice—sooner than they expect."

He turned to go, but paused suddenly and faced Barath.

"Son," he said solemnly, "the hour is at hand when thou must fulfil thy highest destiny: else mine own will be made void. Sooner than thou shouldst fail I shall risk a holocaust of carnage! So prepare thy will to it!"

"I must obey my own conscience, although thou art my spiritual guide," Barath answered calmly. But a subtle apprehension crept into his soul.

"It would be better to obey my interpretation of thy conscience," Vashista answered, scrutinising Barath's face. "Hast heard of Alberoni?"

Aye, Barath knew and Vashista knew what foiled Alberoni—his master's love for a woman, a woman for whose sake he flung away Alberoni's labour for the awakening of Spain. Vashista continued: "But also of Anselm, Becket, Stephen Langton? Wouldst have more? Then have it—even Hildebrand! Beware of Canossa!" Gazing at Barath, he departed.

Barath stood still. The apprehension now filled his soul. "Canossa! Nora, do you hear that? He said Canossa!" Then in sudden passion he cried out from the uttermost depth of his soul, "But I shall risk Canossa for your sake!"

He put his hand to his breast. "Nora, strengthen me!"

But the locket was not there to inspire him, comfort him, strengthen him. . . . He remembered. He had shown it to Nora at the Lotus Garden. It must be there now, on the seat or on the bank of the stream. He hastened there.

The sun was sinking on the western horizon. A solitary figure came to the Lotus Garden. She held a lighted *chirag* in her hands as the other maidens had done earlier in the day. She approached the stream.

"O lamp of my life, flame of my heart," she addressed the *chirag*, "go forth upon the bosom of the stream and reveal to me what awaits me upon the distant shore of my life!"

She knelt on the bank. But hastening footsteps made her pause.

"Suvona!" Barath cried in astonishment.

She gave him just one glance, whilst yet he was a dozen yards away, and turned to the stream.

Barath noted that instantly. Her manner had changed. "Dearest, what is it?"

At that word, dearest, she looked up again. He came near. "My dearest sister, thou alone and unattended?"

She chilled instantly. She turned to the stream in silence.

He was mystified. Something smote him inwardly. "Suvona, have I offended thee?" She heeded not his words. He came and stood by her. "Wilt thou not speak to me, thy brother?"

In agitation she placed the lamp on the bank, arose, and walked a few steps away from him.

"I have a brother," she said slowly, "Udai."

"True. But am I not thy second brother?"

She stood silent, and would not turn to him.

"Then I *have* offended thee," he said, feeling miserable. He would plead with her. "Forgive me, Suvona. Once I was indeed thy brother. Forgive me for the sake of that! Dost remember how we played together, romped together, to the delight of thy father and mine? Thou wert then but ten. And that later day on the eve of my departure for England——" Suvona trembled: growing still, she closed her eyes, dreaming. "Dost remember that day, Suvona, and the mad gallop we had over the fields, with thee seated before me, and thy arms around my neck lest thou shouldst fall? Dost remember, Suvona?"

"Can I ever forget it!"—the words of concentrated passion were wrung out of her heart. For on that day the sword had first pierced her heart.

“Then, dearest, art thou not still my sister?” He came to her with extended hand.

She broke away from him, but stifled the vehemence of her words. “Sister, sister, sister—I am weary of my sisterhood.” Then the vehemence would not be suppressed. “Let me know my fate—and the worst!” she said, going to the lamp.

“How can that lamp tell thee thy future?”

She turned to him in bitterness. “Hast now forgotten the customs of thy people? . . . Let me explain: if this day a maiden places a lamp, representing her life, upon this stream, the River of Life, and the lamp reaches the distant shore in safety, then indeed will her future life be calm and serene and happy. But if the lamp sink in mid-stream, or be shattered against yonder ledge, then her life will be shipwrecked.”

“But supposing the lamp does neither, and is flung up above the ledge, with the shore unattained?”

“Then that would be the cruellest fate of all,” she answered in terror. “Eternal suspense!”

Barath started involuntarily. “Neither in heaven nor in hell!” As his own fate might yet be—till the morrow was over. Till his betrothal to Nora was proclaimed. He turned to Suvona: “May a man try it?”

Suvona was puzzled. “Why not? If he so pleases.”

“Then I will.”

She was now bewildered. She put down the lamp and stood up. Her hands went up to her brow. “Let me think, think! Thou wilt? Thou wilt?”

She turned away from him. “Oh, what wild hope is this? Be still, my heart, be still! Do I dare? Shall I risk? . . . Yes, I dare! I shall risk my all!”

She hastened away and returned forthwith with another *chirag* taken from the pavilion of the garden. It was not of the type generally used by the maidens, but larger and with a broader base.

"This is *thy* life," she said, handing it to him.

Silently they placed their lamps upon the stream. Hers arose, dancing upon the water. His overtook it. Awhile they rode abreast, though three yards apart. Then a wave shot his ahead.

"It sinks!"—a breathless whisper broke from her lips. But it was only a hollow between two waves in which it was out of sight an instant. Hers followed it, vanishing also.

Then he heard a cry of joy. "Look, it rises again!" It was his that had arisen: hers was not in sight. Her cry of joy was for the lamp of *his* life.

"Thine also," he answered; for hers had ridden upon a wave and was overtaking his.

"They come together, together!" she cried in joy and exultation, nestling close to Barath. "Thy life and mine!" For the lamps were converging towards the same point, not merely coming in line.

He heard a deep-drawn breath at his side, heard it so near that he also felt it, felt it fan his face as he bowed his head, refusing to look. Involuntarily he put forth a hand to rest it upon the bank; unwittingly it lay beside another hand that was there already. He felt a twitching run over that hand as its small fingers clasped his involuntarily—clutched them, held them.

Then suddenly he felt her hand leave him; leave him and recede into space. He heard a gasp, a sob, a moan—farther, farther.

And raising his eyes, he saw. The two lamps were

parted asunder. Reflected from a bend on the distant shore, a wave came and parted them, shooting his ahead. Her small lamp hung a moment upon its crest—too small a lamp for such a sudden wave—quivered, whirled round, sank into the deep.

Then Fate, mocking Fate, had had its sport. The self-same wave from the distant shore overtook his lamp, tossed it upon its crest; the lamp's broader base buoyed it up a moment; it rose and fell, and rose again. Then it reached the ledge in mid-stream, and was shot above it. There it lay, safe from the water, but with its fate undecided, with the shore yet unattained. Between heaven and hell.

As one in a dream Barath turned his head. Seven cubits afar Suvona stood beside the bank, leaning upon it, gazing upon the water, seeing yet not seeing. Her hair was unloosened, streaming down to her knees. She stood like some nymph awaiting a voice to call to her from the deep.

"Suvona! Suvona!" The cry was wrung from Barath's heart. He leapt to her side, his arms outstretched. But still she stood there, bereft of speech, sound, motion: as one in a trance bereft of all human senses, deadened in thought, in pain, in very life by some stupendous blow.

"My sister—my poor sister!"

The spell was broken. At that word consciousness leapt back to life within her soul. Her tongue was loosened.

"Touch me not!"

With a shiver she recoiled from his arms. She stood tottering beside the bank, then clutched it to steady herself.

“What have I done to thee that this wave should come to me from afar to rob me of my fate? Answer me!” Standing there with streaming hair she was like unto a prophetess.

Barath humbled himself. “Nothing, Suvona, nothing but good. To me thou hast been an angel of Lakshmi. To thee I have been a curse!” For the wave from afar had come because of him.

He bowed his head, and saw the earth whirl around him; felt some heavy burden fall upon his heart and grind it to dust. For in that moment he realised that unwittingly he had been a curse to Suvona: had returned her evil for good. . . .

Then suddenly it dawned upon him that his own life was also accursed: that it would lie upon the ledge of eternal suspense, neither in heaven nor in hell. He stood still, stunned by the double blow.

“Forgive me! Oh, for pity’s sake forgive me!” He felt an arm around his neck, and a soft hand rise up and smooth his face. “Thine own fate is crueller than mine. Forgive me, forgive me—*dearest!*” He felt her face upon his face, her lips upon his lips.

But he stood motionless, his eyes closed, his head bowed.

Then he felt a tremor come over her, felt her body racked in a shiver, felt her arms drop from his neck—heard a strangled sob receding from him.

“Canst thou not see? *Canst* thou not see?” It was a piteous moan wrenched from her heart. “Art thou blind? These two years thou hast treated me like a child—knowing me as a child at the beginning. But I am a woman, a woman! Oh, how can I say it! . . . Canst not understand—I have loved thee, loved thee,

yearning for a word of response ! There, I have said it—thy blindness has forced my lips ! Oh, canst thou not see ? Together, we shall be happy, our destiny fulfilled. Apart, some cruel fate will befall us both. Oh, art thou blind ? Some sudden wave will come between us *from far across the sea*, shatter my life and leave thine in eternal suspense. . . . Come, my love, come ! Come to me, take me to thy heart as thy destined bride ! . . . Answer me ! Oh, why dost thou not answer ? ”

For Barath stood as one might who was now doubly accursed. In saving him from one curse she had pronounced another, for in that moment the scales at last fell from his eyes. For the first time he realised fully that in making her his sister he had not succeeded in making himself her brother—that in giving her all the love in his heart he could, a brother’s love, he had gained in return all the love in her heart, which was not a sister’s love.

A cruel Fate had done this. While putting into his heart a brother’s love, it had perchance clothed his words, his deeds, with the glamour of another love, with the hope of another love : for perchance it had put a hope into her soul that some day the one love would change into the other, and thus deluding her had deluded him.

Fate—cruel, mocking Fate—had done this : had violated the sanctity of the human heart and blasphemed the purest of human loves : had outraged the holy of holies.

In that hour he cursed Fate. For the sudden wave *had* come from far across the sea. . . .

And Suvona ? Even in that moment the tension of

her heart snapped like a cord. With her ebbing strength she turned from Barath, tottered, then fell prone upon the bank.

Kneeling beside her, he gathered her into his arms. All along the bank, down the declivity, through the groves, through the gardens, he carried her. Once, with a sigh, she almost regained consciousness. He looked into her face, but her eyes were closed. It was better thus: better that she should not regain consciousness whilst yet she must needs be in his arms.

Gazing at her, a sudden passion filled his soul. He bent his lips towards her lips—then flung up his head. "I cannot! I cannot!"

Looking at her again and holding her closer, he slowly bent his head and reverently kissed her on the brow.

"Sister, sister, sister—a thousand times sister!" . . .

And standing afar by the river-bank, Vashista watched. He had come for Suvona, guessing the cause of her absence from her apartments on such a day.

"Yet his destined bride!" he said, hoping to the last, steeling his own heart.

Then something sparkling caught his eye. He picked it up from the ground.

It was a locket, still open. He saw the face of an Englishwoman!

"*That* Englishwoman!" he cried in bitterness.

The name in diamonds was "Nora." But it was the Hindi letters in pearls for "alpha and omega" that crushed him. They could only have been done for Barath. Nora was *his* alpha and omega.

Once again he hardened his heart. "O Vishnu, strengthen thy servant's hand on the morrow! Arm it with thy thunder!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

BARATH'S TEMPTATION

THAT night a number of men were gathered together afar off in the House of the Serpent Gem. Misguided men. Sincere enough, fervent enough, they had sought a revolution in human thought—which was legitimate enough, for the West needed a correction of its conception of the East. But carried off their feet by their fervour, they also sought a physical revolution, not realising that as yet it could only end in failure, that it might even spoil their juster cause.

Their leader arose to address them; a young man with the eyes of a dreamer.

“Brothers, once again I make confession: I was born at Wimbledon, and they took me to a Christian church and called me Emmanuel. Afterwards they took me to an English school and made me read Latin. But I read the lives of Mutius Scævola and the Gracchi. Is there a Scævola among us?”

A youth stood up and held out his left hand. The right was missing. “I lost it in the explosion in the laboratory,” he said.

“Brother, the Motherland accepts thy sacrifice,” Naren answered, then turned to the assembly. “Comrades, at last our unwearied labours of the last twelve months have borne fruit. To-day we control the

telegraphs and the railways of northern India. The British boast that they rule us, a mere handful of them. We will tell the braggarts that it is not without our acceptance, our sanction, our active co-operation. . . .

“Comrades, once I loved England, thinking it still to be the England of Pitt and Fox and Canning. ‘To-day they are ringing bells, to-morrow they will wring their hands’—noble words of justice heralding the freedom of the American Colonies. ‘I have brought the new world into existence to redress the balance of the old’—noble words of freedom also. I loved that England. Instead to-day we have the England of the banjo-poet and the chest-thumping jingo. . . .

“Comrades, to those of you who, like me, belong to Bengal, I have something to say of this banjo-poet. For twenty years he and his hundred imitators in England who write of India by his inspiration, have abused us and insulted us most deeply. I have in mind a recent book deemed to be almost a standard work on India. Confirming the banjo-poet and the others, it calls the Bengalis cowards, despicable cowards, devoid of a redeeming virtue, nay, even *beneath* contempt. Why? Because for twenty years we have taken their abuse lying down. Why, again I ask? They tell us: because we are *afraid* to strike back. Why, I ask yet again? *We* know: because we are meek and mild, and practise the Sermon on the Mount. Who are the real cowards—we who are meek and mild, or these writers who know that we will not strike back? Comrades, are we really afraid to strike back—or merely desist from love of meekness, from the practice of the Sermon on the Mount? Shall we then strike back? To-morrow?

"Brothers, who are cowards? Two great Englishmen in India, a Viceroy and a Chief Justice, have been assassinated by Mohammedans. Since then every Englishman in India sits thrice daily at table, with a Mohammedan kitmutgar standing behind him, within reach of a carving-knife. Well, sometimes, a Mohammedan turns Ghazi, sees sudden visions of the houris of paradise who can be gained by the slaying of an unbeliever. Well, comrades, the eternal possibility of a cold knife is very unnerving. So, comrades, we can understand the present preferential treatment of Mohammedans in India: they have been won over to loyalty by praise and promises of concessions." . . .

The insinuation was not lost upon his hearers. The scorn poured on them for twenty years aroused in them the spirit of retaliation, for the misguided men could not distinguish between their abusers and the bulk of the British nation.

"Brothers, we have to correct another libel. These abusers, sitting in safety, tell the Government to crush us with an iron hand, saying that in the East clemency is mistaken for weakness. These men are fools: they confuse the near East, the Mohammedan East, with India, China, and Japan. The Mohammedan faith is a militant faith and advocates the strong arm. But in India a Hindu king says from his throne to the lowest criminal in his kingdom, 'Brother, thou art forgiven'—and the criminal does lifelong penance in expiation. Is it not likewise in China and Japan wherever the teachings of Buddha and Confucius prevail? I ask our Chinese and Japanese comrades."

Two men arose and bowed silently.

"It is well," Naren continued. "We thank our

Japanese comrade especially for a particular lesson we have learnt from Japan. A dozen years ago the banjo-poet visited Japan and wrote about its people. Seeing that they adopted European ideas like the Bengalis, and noting other similarities, he called the Japanese 'the Bengalis of the Far East'—having already called the Bengalis cowards. Comrades, shall we show to the banjo-poet and his hundred imitators that the Bengalis may be 'the Japanese of India'? These men admire only physical force, not the Sermon on the Mount—and think we have not the means of showing physical force. They think that war is still made with thews and sinews, and give praise to the 'warlike races' of India. But they forget the workshop and the laboratory. Shall we tell them what we have learnt from the present Japanese War? Hand-grenades!

"Brothers, before we dismiss these fools, we must mention how they have degraded the once noble traditions of England. If Englishmen only realised that, they would not make little tin-gods of these men—but hang them from the nearest tree. Listen. They have asked for stern repression. To whose loss will that be? England's. The future English historian, remembering that his country was once the home of freedom and the giver of freedom to others, will weep, saying that this indeed was the beginning of her decadence—that it was necessary to maintain her Empire by such laws, when a little conciliation earlier, a little justice, a little sympathy might have availed instead. Comrades, the historian will weep for the fair name of his country, not for us.

"One last word of these fools, how they injure their

country in all things. In the earlier reverses in the recent South African War these fools wrote bombastic articles, which found their way to the front. Then Tommy Atkins read with astonishment that he had been 'decimated.' He knew not what it meant, but vaguely felt that it was something horrible. So the next time a British force found itself in a hot fire it thought the horrible carnage must cease—and promptly gave up the attack or even surrendered. Ye shades of Badajos and Malplaquet, see the degraders of your once noble country !

"Brothers, we shall close with a larger purpose. It has been deemed expedient to have here only one Chinese and one Japanese delegate, for more might have embarrassed their countrymen at home. They have come to represent, together with us, the entire conflict between East and West. On the economic side that conflict has already begun—and already the West acknowledges its final and inevitable defeat. Indians, Chinese, and Japanese are excluded from the West because of their greater economic efficiency—which is a proportion between production and cost of living. In the West itself the Germans and the Americans are proving more efficient than the English ; the Germans, because their cost of living is less ; the Americans, because though their cost of living is greater, their production is still greater owing to greater skill, greater enterprise, and better machinery. But all the West combined acknowledge that they cannot withstand the competition of the Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, who have greater industry, thrift, peacefulness, sobriety—all of which are factors in economic efficiency. It is the eternal law of the survival of the

fittest. And in the economic world the West has now tacitly acknowledged its ultimate vanquishment by the East. Our two comrades will carry the message to China and Japan, and thence to their countrymen abroad.

“With that message they will also carry the assurance that when the conflict becomes physical the three countries will be as one in sympathy, as even now they are in the present struggle in Manchuria—which is but an emblem of the larger conflict of East and West. Brothers, I have spoken.”

The meeting dispersed.

Oh, the pity of it, the pity of it! . . . Let loose the dogs of war, if ye will, ye demons of hell! Christianity has failed, the Sermon on the Mount has failed. Misunderstanding, libel, abuse, mutual recriminations, have done their work, begetting hate, bloodshed, anarchy. Gloat, ye devils, gloat!

The morning broke at Barathpur calm and serene. Moolraj, faithful Moolraj, who watched over his master with ceaseless solicitude, had learnt the secret of his heart. Nay, it was no more a secret now: for Moolraj had been told to prepare a seat to the right of the throne and as high; one also on the left, not quite so high, but at least as high as Udai's on the day of Barath's home-coming. With mingled emotions Moolraj saw to their preparation; but in the emotions joy predominated, joy for his master's happiness. In his blind personal devotion Moolraj ever kept his gaze upon his master—and forgot to glance around.

The throne-room in other respects was as before, except that there was now a small table for documents by the outer wall, with two chairs beside it. A little

below the table there was a large door unused on the day of Barath's coming, but now kept lightly closed by two guards standing before it. It led directly to the public staircase. The corridor beyond the arches at the bottom of the chamber communicated with the inner palace on one side, and with the outer world on the other ; but the door was for special comers.

Moolraj and Harnam were in the chamber from the first. All was ready.

To them came the Harkora by the corridor from the public side. "I bear tidings of the most momentous character." He glanced at Moolraj, Harnam, and the two guards. "You are all in a placid mood. Verily the centre of a raging cyclone is of the stillest calm !"

"Hast come to tell us that a cyclone of wind rages around us ?" Moolraj asked casually. "Then it is false news."

"A cyclone of frenzies and passions ; whirlwinds of raging men and devils. But you have hedged the Master with a rampart from the outer world for the past three months, so that not a breath, not a whisper, can reach him."

"Give thy news, and make no comment."

The Harkora read from his palm strips : "At the third watch of the night, the darkest hour, a *chakra* (wheel) of fire leapt to life upon the distant hilltop far to the east ; a moment after two others stood by its side, one on the right, one on the left. Five minutes later they were answered by a triple *chakra* on the north, and yet five minutes after by another on the west. The south remains in darkness."

He turned to the next strip : "In the city strange scenes are witnessed. The multitude in a ceaseless

stream pour through the streets and by-lanes, hurrying hither and thither in an unwonted manner, seeking nothing, yet expecting something. Groups of men gather together in bazaars and street corners, talk in whispers, look askance at the horizon and towards the palace, then, shaking their heads, depart in silence."

"Enough, my friend, I do not believe thy news," Moolraj said. "True news thou canst sell only once; but false news twice—once the news, once the contradiction. Still I shall buy thy precious news."

He paid the Harkora and took the strips. Giving them to Harnam, he said, "Take these to the Heaven-born, but tell him they are only the Harkora's usual stock-in-trade and are not to be believed too literally."

Harnam departed with the strips by the corridor to the inner palace; the Harkora the other way by the public exit.

"*Dohai ! Dohai !* (Justice ! Justice !)" It was a voice crying beyond the guarded door, followed by a knock. The guards stood still.

"*Dohai ! Dohai !*" Again a knock. The guards did not move.

"*Dohai ! Dohai !*" For the third time the knock was heard.

"Let him enter," Moolraj bade the guards. "He that cries *dohai* must be heard."

The guards withdrew, and a man entered; he was garbed as a peasant.

"Thou hast cried for justice, but on an inauspicious day," Moolraj said to him.

"To the poor all days are alike; days of toil and of pain," the man answered. "Auspices are the luxury of the rich."

"True, my friend. Nevertheless this is an inopportune hour."

"The cry for justice goes up to heaven from the hearts of the poor from sunrise to sunrise and at the midnight hour."

"State thy cause?" Moolraj asked.

"My ancestral land, tilled by these hands for forty years, has been estreated for five years' arrears of taxes. I have pleaded poverty, drought, famine—in vain. Now I have come to the Fountain of Justice."

"This day's audience is for a supreme purpose on which the happiness of the Heaven-born and all Barathpur depends," Moolraj explained. "Wherefore I fear he will be unable to grant audience to petitions."

"His heart is ever with the poor," the man persisted. "He will not turn away unanswered a cry for justice, be the day and hour what they may."

Moolraj thought awhile. "Perhaps thou art right. Stand aside, and neither move nor speak. But if at any time the Heaven-born deigns to notice thee and speak to thee, then make obeisance and present thy petition." . . .

Meanwhile Barath was in his private chamber deep in thought and in anguish. But he would not turn back now, cost what it might. He would not if he could: he could not if he would.

He had a letter before him; just a brief message:—

"DILKHUSHA,—I have found rest and comfort. At Kensington, within sight of our old home. Farewell, Dilkhusha! This is the last letter I may write to the outer world before I begin my new life of peace and rest. . . . Remember your promise

to the dead. That in the hour of England's peril you will judge her justly. Farewell! God bless you and keep you! Your second mother, ELLEN."

Reading it, a wave of mingled emotions and memories swept over Barath. He kissed the letter, bowing his head.

Then Harnam came and delivered the Harkora's news. He came back to Moolraj, and stood silent.

"Speak, friend," Moolraj asked in anxiety.

"The news affected him strangely," Harnam answered.

"Then it may be true!"

"Verily. The fiery *chakra* may be a signal."

"But the *chakra* is the wheel-of-destiny, the emblem of Vishnu!" Moolraj exclaimed.

"Hence its deep significance. It can only apply to Vishnu's reincarnation—the New Krishna."

"Aye, for forty centuries we have awaited that signal."

"Perhaps it is not that signal, but a conspiracy."

"Against the Master?" Moolraj cried, his hand leaping to his sword.

"Perhaps for him, and yet against him."

"How?"

"I know not exactly; I merely conjecture. But he is resolved to know the truth of this, and will be here forthwith."

"Once again thinking of his people, not of himself," Moolraj cried in affection. "On such a day he may well think of himself and his own happiness."

"Yet mingled with the coming joy there seems to be some hidden sorrow. Thrice in his sleep last

night he has cried out in anguish, ' Sister, sister, sister ! ' So the night-guard tells me."

" He was thinking of Rani Delini whom he may lose at any moment. He knows he has no right to hold her here, save by his loving solicitude."

" His mind, already buffeted between joy and sorrow, has now to think of the fiery *chakra*. Is it the emblem of prophecy—or the signal of conspiracy ? "

" Be it the one or the other, our course is clear, thine and mine," Moolraj said. " We must see what the Master does, and then follow his lead implicitly."

" I swear it ! " Harnam answered, with hand on sword.

" To follow him through earth and heaven and hell ! Brother, let us seal the vow."

They exchanged swords. . . .

Barath came to the throne-room by the corridor from his private chamber. He was still in his ordinary garb.

" Moolraj," he bade, " send trusty messengers to the four city gates for distant tidings. See that all arrangements are made : see to it thyself. I would long to have thee here with me this day : but thou couldst serve me better if needed elsewhere. There is an hour yet before I give audience. Meanwhile I wish to be in peace."

Moolraj, Harnam, and the two guards saluted, and turned to depart.

" Stay ; I see a stranger here," Barath said. " Let him come forth."

The petitioner prostrated himself before Barath. " *Dohai, dohai*, O Fountain of Justice ! "

" This day couldst thou not leave me to myself ? " Barath said. " Give me thy petition."

The man arose, approached Barath, and on his knees handed the petition. Barath glanced at it.

The small door behind the throne silently opened, and Vashista appeared.

Barath took a pen from the table, wrote across the petition, and returned it to the peasant. "Take it to the proper office. Thy ancestral land shall be given back to thee. Go in peace."

"A poor man's blessing, O Throne of Mercy!" the petitioner cried. He arose, turned to depart, then sank back on his knees. "Dharmavatar,¹ let me speak, even in gratitude? Thou hast asked for distant tidings. I have some to give--what I have seen and heard. Let me speak?"

Vashista advanced. "Cease!"

The peasant leapt to his feet, and turned to him.

"I shall speak even though thou dost damn my soul!"

"Speak!" Barath commanded.

The peasant sank on his knees again before Barath. "A hundred and twenty thousand men were encamped last night in the fields beyond the city whence I have come. They all wear the long saffron robe, but what is beneath the saffron robe I know not. And a large multitude, flocking together from the temples, are following in their wake, in a rabble horde. Why, I know not."

"Go thou to the multitude and give them this message," Barath said to him. "The cry for justice has been heard--of that thou art witness--and will be heard again. If they come in a peaceful body and have any grievance, I shall hear them personally,

¹ Dharma (Faith) and avatar (Incarnation). A supreme designation for a Hindu Prince.

without intervention or intermediary. Go in peace. I have spoken."

The peasant departed, followed by the guards, Harnam and Moolraj; for Barath had said that he desired solitude for an hour. Thus faithful Moolraj left his master, to serve his cause beyond the city gates—to stay the multitude and the saffron-robed men, if need be. But his heart was sad, and a vague premonition would have kept him by his master's side.

Barath turned to Vashista. "Father, couldst thou not also spare me this day?"

"This day above all others I must speak to thee—before thou dost make any public announcement. I have come from Suvona," he added significantly, pointing to the door behind the throne.

A look of pain swept over Barath's face at the mention of Suvona. He sat down on a chair by the table abruptly.

"Why torment me—and uselessly?" he said. "My pain is great already. I have passed through the joys of heaven and the pains of hell in a single day—and still live on this earth."

The High Priest sat down on the other chair. "Thy pain is great indeed. But it is not useless. There is yet hope!"

"Hope of what?"

"Reparation!"

"I gave her a brother's love: in that I was blind. But reparation?" he cried bitterly. "Devise some means to turn her love into hatred, and teach her to curse me!"

"We shall think of curses afterwards: now we shall speak of love. Dost know how she loves thee? Even

now she walks about her apartments gazing before her, murmuring words that none can understand, save that they concern two lamps and a sudden wave that came between them. She gazes vacantly into space, then cries out in anguish, 'Come to me, my love, come to me! Take me to thy heart, take me—thy destined bride!' Then if one speaks to her, she awakes, and bursts into tears——" With a cry of grief Barath covered up his face with his hands.

The High Priest continued, "And such love as that hast thou flung away for the sake of this!" He brought out the locket he had picked up the night before, opened it, and showed it to Barath. "Wouldst compare this face to Suvona's? Wouldst compare a glimmering lamp to the full moon? Yes, thou canst keep it: it has done its work. For the sake of this wouldst scorn Suvona?"

"I have not scorned Suvona. She is the noblest woman on earth, and I love her from my deepest heart—as a brother. For she is my sister."

"As a sister."

"Wherefore, an adopted sister. And the law of adoption is equal to the law of nature. Dost forget that?"

"And even were the adoption valid, I, the High Priest of Vishnu, have power to dissolve it. Dost forget that?" He paused and looked at Barath keenly. "Even as I have power, as the High Priest of Vishnu, to curse a Prince!" Saying that, he returned to suavity instantly. "And now, my son, I dissolve the bar between thee and Suvona—for thy higher destiny."

"Father, give me a little peace. Have I delivered my conscience in bondage to thee forever, so that I may never think and act for myself again?"

"No, never—in matters of grave import. I hold thy bond for it in the very fact of thy birth. For it is written that armed with the thunders of Vishnu the spiritual power shall be above the temporal." Again he changed his tone. "Yet my sole desire is to place thee upon a throne where thou alone wilt combine all power, temporal and spiritual."

"Why tempt me? To have that supreme destiny one must first *feel* it. And I do not feel it."

"The feeling will come presently. Dost know what is the true mission of this body of a hundred and twenty thousand men encamped in the fields?"

"I know not. Yet the saffron robe disturbs me. The last time the men of Barathpur donned it was four centuries ago when eighty thousand knights died to preserve the honour of a Princess."

"Well spoken, my son!" Then Vashista added, "And now a hundred and twenty thousand men have sworn to die for their Prince. I have but to light the fiery *chakra* upon the watch-tower of the citadel, and they will place thee upon a throne such as no king or emperor has ever known."

"And three months after?" Barath asked. "Just so long as it takes a hundred transports to gather together and cross seven thousand miles of sea. What then? What answer will thy men give?"

"Then another hundred thousand will be ready to strengthen them; and three months later half a million: the sons of the pupils of Allard, Court, and Ventura now number half a million. And then when England has sent away her regular army and India is in revolt—what will a great European Power do, seeing England's eastern shore laid bare? Dost know what happened

in Europe yesterday? I shall tell thee later. And dost think we expect no aid from the rest of India—Sikhs, Jats, Dogras? Have they no grievance? Have they not done the hard work of the British Empire that would have killed the British soldier—and in return have received on retirement oaths, blows, fines and imprisonment if they set foot in a British Colony? In India itself the commonest Tommy, the son of an East End unsuccessful pork-butcher, is placed above a Sikh or a Rajput soldier of good caste, and patronises him. Seeing that, and commended highly by the combined European forces at the relief of the Pekin Legations, several Sikhs on retirement took service with the Russians and were placed at Dalny as junior officers *in command of Russian troops*. Seeing that, the British authorities brought pressure upon the priests at the leading Sikh temple in India to recall them under threat of religious censure. Dost think the Sikhs have forgotten what praise the European armies gave them—when they see themselves in India placed beneath pork-butchers? Do not the Sepoys understand why the British Army sits at ease in India, occasionally murdering a punkah coolie that does not pull the fan properly—whilst they do the hardest work? Why is the British Army here? *To watch over the Sepoys!* ”

“What happens to the murderers?” Barath asked abruptly, ignoring the rest. “What happens to men who bear honourable arms, yet murder poor half-starved coolies?” These things ever aroused his blood.

“Escape scot-free,” Vashista answered. “Read the case of *Empress v. Howard* in the High Court of Calcutta.

Also of *Empress v. O'Hara and MacDermott*. In other instances the case does not even come into Court. A man is found murdered in a British cantonment. The supreme authorities, sincerely anxious for justice, demand the surrender of the murderer; the regiment refuses; the whole regiment is punished; in reply they start their usual tricks of destroying their accoutrements; if further pressure is brought on them, they threaten to break out and 'kill every native they find.' Then the authorities, remembering that they have to rely on Tommy Atkins, give up the struggle, and hush up the matter. And instead we are told that the British Government must show the strong hand in dealing with sedition——"

"Enough!" Barath cried, starting to his feet. His faith in the British was firm. But he was an idolater who expected his idol never to fall: and here was a serious fall. He was an idealist, loving certain virtues the most, hating certain sins the most. Then he calmed instantly. "But these things did not happen in South Africa? There the conduct of the British troops was most exactly correct."

"True indeed! The British Army is the model of propriety—when the eyes of Europe are upon it!"

Barath was eaten with doubt. Vashista saw his advantage, and pressed it home. A random shot had hit when a hundred well-aimed ones had missed. Vashista had touched the softest point in Barath's heart, and the weakest point in the British Government from Barath's standard of ideals. He could have forgiven anything but that.

"Son, son, the noblest mission of the New Krishna is to raise up the fallen, but also to crush the cruel ones

of the earth—men who hurt and slay the weak and defenceless, yea, men who trample upon their wives, the very women they have sworn to love.”

“ I cannot ! I cannot ! ” Barath cried in anguish. “ I do not *feel* that call, nor see a vision of it ! I merely hear thy voice.”

“ Wouldst *see* the vision then ? ” Vashista cried in rising hope.

“ Father, do not tempt me beyond human endurance ! I am but flesh and blood ! ” Barath sat down and covered his face with his hands.

“ Thy words strengthen me ! Thou art beginning to see light at last ! ”

“ No more ! ”

“ Yes ! Let the inspiration act ! ” Saying that, Vashista pulled the cord holding the curtains above the arches before the corridor. The curtains came down, transforming the room into a private chamber ; and the light was dim in the sudden change.

“ See the vision ! ” Vashista drew his chair beside Barath. “ Yes, the hour is at hand. The proclamation of the New Krishna is now due, a Prince of the House of Rama destined to rebuild the walls of Indraprastha (Delhi). Canst see the vision of thy destiny ? Close thine eyes and see ! ”

Involuntarily Barath closed his eyes. He felt a sense of repose creep over him. He was facing his throne, but opening his eyes dreamily awhile later he failed to see the throne. Instead he seemed to see but a mist.

“ The veil is lifting ”—the voice of the High Priest sounded in his ear as if from afar. “ See the walls of Indraprastha ! ”

The mist seemed to recede, then to rise slowly. It appeared to be a vast space at which he was gazing.

"See the myriad shields of gold and silver upon the marble walls"—Barath heard the words, and in the distance saw something that took shape and grew distinct. "Yes, it is the New Delhi! See the ivory pillars at the Lion Gate, and the trellised arches of scented sandal. See between the arches the streets of inlaid enamel, green and pink, gold and crimson. See further: beyond the street a palace of whitest marble studded with diamonds and rubies and emeralds and sapphires. Enter within."

The palace drew nearer. Barath seemed to be standing at its threshold.

"See the walls of alabaster draped in gold-wrought kincob. Read the painted poems upon the pillars, each recounting the history of a Prince. See further. See the throne of burnished gold, encrusted with gems of a thousand hues."

Barath was still gazing towards his own throne, but did not see it. Instead there now appeared to his vision another throne in the self-same place.

"Canst see him upon the throne? Whose face is it?"

"It is I!"—a faint whisper came from Barath's lips as if in sleep.

"Look again! A hundred Princes lie prostrate before him. Behind him, at the curtain, a hundred beautiful maidens sing to him with esthraj, saringi and sethar. Dost hear the music?" And a faint distant sound of murmuring voices seemed to trickle into Barath's ear.

"Look again! At his right hand is seated his destined bride, the loveliest woman of her day! She is

unveiled, for as his bride she too is now a divinity. Canst see her face? Who is she?"

"Suvona!" But Barath knew not that his lips had whispered the word. A deep numbness crept over his soul and senses.

"See, the vision changes! See the New Krishna in his other mission! See the fallen ones of the earth whom he has raised up from sin and vice and misery. See their dumb homage before his throne!"

Something stirred in Barath's heart. Oh, what temptation was this!

"See again. See the New Krishna in his might, in his wrath: as the avenger of wrongs. See before him the criminal who has trampled upon his wife with hob-nailed boots—such as they wear in England. Hear the New Krishna's sentence: 'Inasmuch as thou hast taken the risk of killing a defenceless woman, the very woman thou hadst sworn to love at God's altar, we shall accept the risk of killing thee; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Thou shalt receive a hundred lashes with leaden thongs. If thou dost die, thy wife will be rid of thy oppression and the world of a savage tiger. If thou dost live, thou shalt labour for seven years in chains, and the fruits of thy toil shall be given to thy wife.'

"See once again! See the New Krishna in his mercy. See before him the starving wretch that has stolen—and is punished by the law of every land on earth—see his forgiveness, comfort, aid. . . . See yet again. See before him the deserted mother that has killed her child in frenzy, because her own soul and heart and body were slain first. See his forgiveness, comfort, aid. But see also the foul betrayer dragged before him

—who in every land on earth escapes punishment—see the New Krishna's judgment. A hundred lashes yearly for seven years—that thus there shall be no more betrayal of trusting women. . . . And all that the New Krishna shall have power to do ! ”

Oh, what temptation was this, what temptation that in the power, the glory, the vengeance, the mercy, all combined, had not been dreamt of in human philosophy !

“ Dost see his face ? Who is it ? ”

“ It is I ! ”

“ Then receive thy proclamation ! ” At Vashista's words the curtains before the arches parted. Ramanand entered, followed by a group of priests. Each carried in his right hand a garland of champak and lotus, and in his left a brazier of incense.

“ Hail, mighty Krishna, hail ! ” Ramanand chanted, laying his garland at Barath's feet.

“ Hail, divine Krishna, hail ! ” the chorus of priests answered, laying their garlands also at his feet.

“ Mount the throne of Rama, thy promised throne ! ” the High Priest intoned.

“ Accept our homage ! ” Ramanand chanted, offering incense thrice.

“ Our devotion, our servitude ! ” the chorus of priests answered, offering incense thrice.

“ And the fealty of Kings ! ” the High Priest intoned.

“ Of all earth ! Of all earth ! Of all earth ! ” Ramanand chanted, offering incense at each time.

“ Of all ages ! Of all ages ! Of all ages ! ” the chorus of priests answered, offering incense at each time.

“ Accept the vision of thy future ! ” Vashista said in his ear.

Still gazing dreamily, Barath stretched forth a hand towards his throne. Vashista snatched up a garland and thrust it into his hand.

"It is I!" Barath cried in ecstasy, gazing through the cloud of incense as the priests waved their thuribles before him. He flung the garland around his neck. "It is I! I am the New Krishna! The Chohan, the Rahtor, the Sesodia, the Agnikool, all shall bow down before me and call me Master. See, see—the heavens open, and Arjuna, Rama, Karna leap down to my side! Hear the voice of Vishnu proclaiming me! I am the New Krishna!"

"*Jai, jai, Krishna jai!*" Vashista, Ramanand, and the priests combined did homage. "Hail, Ruler of Barath-barsha!"

With a sudden cry Barath broke from the spell. A look of horror crept into his eyes.

"What have I done? I have blasphemed, I have blasphemed! I am not Krishna, but a feeble mortal!" He swung round to the priests. "Begone, ye foul tempters!" He tore off the garland from his neck and hurled it down. "Take back your homage!"

He rushed to the curtains, to the corridor, into the palace. "Nora, Nora—you are my destiny!"

Thus Barath would fling away his throne, his divinity, for the love of a woman.

What would you, my masters, what would you! Man's love for woman has lost kingdoms. When the Spirit moves you, go and burn Helen upon the walls of Troy.

What would you, my masters, what would you! Man's love for woman has lost the world. Could you

undo the sin of Adam for the love of Eve—and restore the forbidden fruit to its bough and withdraw the flaming sword from Eden? Could you withdraw the waters of the Deluge—and make the daughters of men less fair and the sons of God less foolish?

What would you, what would you!

Vashista turned to the priests. “Take back the offerings. Stand by the outer door and await the crisis. Then in due time enter fearlessly. Remember I am armed with the might of Vishnu.”

“We shall remember!” the priests answered. They picked up the garlands and departed.

Vashista turned to Ramanand. “One hope remains. Are the people ready?”

“All Barathpur is ready.”

“Is Rani Delini duly prepared?”

“I have myself anointed her,” Ramanand answered. “The people, intoxicated with fervour, await her coming.”

“It is well!” Vashista said, still in hope. “The hour of her coming shall be the hour of our victory. Await the call.”

Ramanand departed; but Vashista remained in the throne-room. Alone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE IDES OF MARCH

Two by two the guards of the palace entered the throne-room in procession, headed by their captain, Harnam. The curtain was now raised up, and the populace stood on the terrace beyond—as they had done on the day of Barath's home-coming. The guards removed the table and chairs, and took up their position on either side of the chamber.

Now Barath entered, with Nora and Melnor. They ascended the dais together. Nora sat on Barath's right, level with the throne; Melnor on the left, on the same level as Udai before. Barath wore his robes of state. Nora over her own dress a scarf of cloth-of-gold placed across from her left shoulder to the right side of the waist. It was encrusted with diamonds, rubies, and pearls, and had belonged to Barath's mother—and before her to a dozen Princesses. Before, it had been worn as a veil; but in fourfold Nora wore it as a scarf. It sufficed.

Barath's personal attendant brought a packet wrapped up in a shawl, and placed it beside the ample throne.

Barath glanced at Harnam and the guards. Harnam approached, knelt before Nora and silently offered her the hilt of his sword. She touched it with her right

hand. Then the guards came two by two, and did homage likewise. Madhava and Vindara followed, and did civil homage to Nora with a dish of perfumed spices.

Melnor looked at Vashista in triumph. "Alberoni has failed!" Aye, Melnor knew what foiled Alberoni—his master's love for a woman.

"Aye, but not Hildebrand!" Vashista answered. He turned to Barath. "Thou hast still the loyalty of thy palace!"

"And of all Barathpur!" Harnam cried hotly.

"Perhaps!" Vashista said in irony.

"We shall see to that," Barath answered quietly. To Harnam: "We shall meet our people." He used the plural form to include Nora.

Harnam withdrew by the corridor on the public side. A commotion was heard outside, for now a vast multitude had gathered in the courtyard below. Harnam returned with the peasant whose petition Barath had granted earlier in the day.

The peasant made obeisance. "Dharmavatar, I met the rabble horde on their way to the city. Their leader was haranguing them with threats and menacing gestures. I have persuaded them to come here for justice. The leader with two comrades wait outside."

"Let them enter," Barath bade.

The peasant departed, and returned with the three men forthwith. They came in sullenly, in ragged garb, and armed with cudgels. They deposited the cudgels on the floor.

"What is your grievance, ye men of Barathpur?" Barath asked them.

The leader hesitated, glancing at the guards.

“Be brave, my friends, and fear not!” said Vashista encouragingly.

“For three moons drought, then tempest and inundation, have swept over the land, and the people suffer exceedingly,” the leader spoke. “The gods are angry because of alien influences.”

“So you would break out in disorder and disturb the peace of the land, ye foolish people?”

“Aye,” the spokesman answered sullenly, “to appease the anger of the gods.”

Barath turned to Vashista. “Do we see thy handwriting in this?”

“My sign-manual, and seal of State!” the High Priest answered.

“How long will you suffer this presumptuous priest?” Melnor said to Barath.

“Beware, Lord Melnor, beware!” the High Priest exclaimed. “There was once an English king who sought to rid himself of a presumptuous priest—and lived to do penance in sackcloth and ashes, aye, with scourges!”

Barath ignored him. He turned to the spokesman of the rabble. “They have lied who have told you that the gods are appeased by acts of disorder and violence. Now tell us: what was done to those recently who riotously opposed the authorities at Cawnpore, Lahore, and elsewhere in British territory? Answer!” But the man was sullenly silent. “Then we will tell you: they were swept away by the soldiery by a hail of bullets. But here we shall be more merciful. We have heard you personally. Now return peacefully to your homes, and if you have any special or specific grievance, lay it before us in due form through our

faithful minister, Vindara. He has your cause at heart and has proved it."

Vindara salaamed profoundly. "My head be my sacrifice. Thy servant heareth."

"But if after this you commit any act of rioting," Barath said to the malcontents, "our army will have to disperse you by force."

The High Priest turned to the malcontents. "Remember, the men of the army are your blood-brothers."

"We have done with thy domination!" Barath said to the High Priest.

"Not yet!" the High Priest answered. He waited till the three leaders of the malcontents departed: they were hailed clamorously by the populace outside, and the shouts were heard in the throne-room. "*That* is my credential!" the High Priest added.

Then the large door on the side of the chamber was opened, and a deputation of feudal nobles entered. They all wore ancient jewelled swords, and some were in chain armour—as still worn in parts of India as a badge of long lineage.

"Our homage, liege lord!" they said to Barath, drawing their swords, holding up the hilt, and kissing it.

"Welcome, Thakur Sahibs!" Barath answered joyfully. He turned to Vashista. "We have still our nobles!"

"For this hour," Vashista replied.

"Liege lord, we have a cause to plead," said the chief noble.

"We will hear it," Barath answered.

"For seventeen centuries we have possessed our

land by military service," the spokesman said. "Now we are compelled to pay annually in gold and silver."

"Thakur Sahib, thou alone hast a thousand tenants ~~who~~ now pay thee in silver in lieu of personal service," Barath answered him. "Then wherein lies thy hardship in paying us in gold and silver?"

"No hardship, liege lord: merely contrary to our ancient custom."

"Then we have to tell thee that some of our ancient customs must be altered. Hast thou heard of the Samurai of Japan who voluntarily gave up their ancient privileges, and thus laid the foundations of the present greatness of their country? There are men in India to-day who talk of imitating the Japanese: they have to learn first the lesson of self-sacrifice, like the Japanese. Thakur Sahib, we have no further need of feudal service, but wouldst thou and thy caste-brethren do us true and honourable service? Then become our civil administrators—our judges and executive officers."

"And herd with the sons of bunniahs and grain merchants?" the noble cried.

"That may be in British India; but here we make the first offer of such high offices to thy caste. Come, Thakur, give us thy word to participate in our civil government."

The spokesman looked at his companions. They cast down their eyes in hesitation.

The High Priest strengthened them. "Thakurs of high lineage, for fourscore generations you have defended the shrines and monuments of your country by your valour: will you now betray the traditions

of your caste, and yield up your honourable swords for a foul pen?"

"Thou, Vashista—thou dost say that?" Barath cried. "Thou didst act as our dewan, and hold a foul pen! But we tell thee we have done with ~~thy~~ intervention!"

"Thou hast said it! I did *act* as thy dewan—to play Alberoni!"

Barath turned to the nobles. "It is false! The pen is but a symbol: the task is honourable. It is as honourable to govern your countrymen by your wisdom as to defend them by your valour."

But the nobles now shook their heads dubiously, and were silent.

"So be it!" Barath said to them. "But we warn you that having made you the first offer, we shall henceforth throw open our high offices even to the sons of bunniahs and grain merchants—if they be found worthy."

The nobles departed by the door, escorted by Harnam, and were greeted clamorously by the multitude in the courtyard below.

"Thou hast lost thy nobles!" the High Priest said to Barath in triumph. "Yet a word from me of dispensation from the traditions of their caste—and they will be again at thy service. There is yet time at this eleventh hour." There was a mingled threat and persuasion in his voice. "A little while, and the men of Barathpur will be in a frenzy to place an idol upon the highest altar—or to hurl it to the ground. Which wilt thou have? Shall I light the beacon flame?"

"Once for all we have done with thy domination

and intervention and guidance," Barath said calmly. "We have still our faithful army."

"And thy army shall answer thee!" the High Priest cried.

From the large door there now entered Chandra Sena and a dozen men. They all wore the long saffron robe. They saluted in military fashion.

"Chandra Sena, we have need of your service," Barath said to him in English. "Unknown to us an evil crisis has been worked up in Barathpur; but we confidently rely on you to suppress all disorders."

"My child is dead," Chandra answered in Hindi, casting down his eyes. "I have donned the saffron robe."

"This is a strange speech, Chandra."

"Strange but true, Heaven-born."

"Formerly you were almost a European."

"And now I am the son of my forefathers."

"But your allegiance to us?"

"My allegiance was to the Prince of Destiny. To Barath, the son of Barath, of the House of Rama."

"Am I a changeling, and not my father's son? Am I not Barath, the son of Barath, of the House of Rama?"

"Thou art he—if thou wilt. Even now!" Then Chandra cried out passionately, "Heaven-born, I implore thee say but the word, and I shall call up a hundred and twenty thousand men to proclaim thee!" He flung off the saffron robe, and revealed a military uniform beneath—of Japanese pattern. His companions did likewise.

Melnor had been sitting still, somewhat bored, ignoring the signs of discord, confident of the final strength of the Imperial Government. He now started.

"What sedition is this? Who talks of an army of a hundred and twenty thousand men in Barathpur?" He paused, and recovered his composure. "I see: a mere mob!"

"As good an army as you will ever see," Chandra answered him in English.

"Armed with scythes?" Melnor could not repress the sneer.

"Or the finest guns and rifles. True, the rifles came as scythes and ploughshares, the first batch of cartridges as pins and needles, before we could make them ourselves. But the guns were more accurately described as machinery."

"But what are you going to do with this fine army?" Now Melnor cared not to disguise the sneer.

"That depends upon——"

Vashista interposed. "Me. Also upon Barath. It is nearly too late, but he has just time to agree with me, and thus avert the peril that awaits him." He faced Barath. "For the last time: shall I light the beacon flame?"

Barath arose from his throne, slowly, solemnly. "I am beginning to understand," he said.

Aye, the scales fell from his eyes. Chandra's explicit words made clear to him at last the purpose that all along had been moulding the destiny of Barathpur, unknown to him, unsuspected, undreamt of. Now he saw the sum-total of its results focussed all together. And in that he realised at last that whereas its final purpose might have been to place him upon a higher throne as one worthy, it might yet be as an alternative to hurl him from his throne as one deemed unworthy. He turned to the British Resident.

"Lord Melnor, let me declare publicly that so far I have reposed an implicit trust upon the good faith of the British. Will you now in turn declare the intention of the British Government towards us—just to strengthen my trust?" He had to use the singular form, and the necessity for it cut him to the heart. For he had to speak for himself now, not for Nora also.

"It is contrary to the dignity of the Imperial Government that I should publicly proclaim its policy before this assembly." Melnor could not help glancing somewhat superciliously at the motley crowd gathered on the terrace. That might be an Eastern custom—to have representatives of the proletariat see and hear the highest of State functions—but not in accordance with Imperial dignity. "If you wish to hear me personally," he said to Barath, "I shall be pleased to speak to you in private—as a friend."

"Lord Melnor, the time is now past for private conferences," Barath said to him gravely. "Do you realise what has happened? A modern army of a hundred and twenty thousand men is marching upon the palace; three months hence it will number a quarter of a million; six months hence, half a million, with aid from British India—if I but speak the word. But I choose not to speak that word, as I still retain an implicit faith in the British. Do you realise what has happened? My throne is tottering—and the British Empire in India. You and I must stand or fall together, but we must stand or fall in public—before this very assembly. I would rather see Britain just than Britain great, but much more would I see her great by being just. Now, pray answer me."

"My answer is that when this revolution fails, as it

must fail, the Imperial Government shall be told of it."

"I have seen to it that the Imperial Government does not hear of it for a week," Vashista laughed. "Do you know what has happened throughout northern India this morning? I shall tell you. There is a railway strike and a telegraph strike. The telegraph wires have been cut at intervals, and the railway lines destroyed in parts, and the bridges blown up with bombs. The Imperial Government will be too busy restoring its own communications to wonder why it does not get the usual casual news from remote parts. Barathpur is completely isolated, and its own internal communications are in our control. Even when the Imperial Government gets the news, it will be unable to move till the strikes are over. Do you know why we awaited this day? Do you know what happened in Europe yesterday? I shall tell you. Britain's relations with a great European Power were strained to the breaking point—and she cannot send to India one little drummer boy."

Melnor thought awhile, then arose, slowly, solemnly.

"So be it; I shall speak," he said. He turned to Vashista. "My first words will be to indict you! It is the priesthood that has ruined India and every State in India; now as in the past. For its selfish gain it has made void the political destiny of India from the beginning. Ahead of Rome in political wisdom at the start, India fell behind Rome, and then into political stagnation, because of a priestly oligarchy. It was the priesthood that ruined King Jaipal of Lahore, and betrayed Somnath into the hands of the Moslems. Since then it is the priesthood that has barred the way

to every progress by keeping the multitude in the grossest ignorance. Of that I charge you !”

“It is false !” Vashista answered. “In the past our selfishness was great indeed ; but now it is the priesthood that labours for the true regeneration of India.”

“And now to your friends in British India, the nationalist leaders,” Melnor continued ; “for I see that you could not have ventured on this conspiracy without their secret aid. They are inflated with the success of Japan : but they forget that Japan has made strenuous efforts first industrially and commercially before engaging in the present war. Have these friends of yours seen to the economic progress of India first ? Of that I charge them !

“And now to you, Barath. I choose to speak as a friend, though indeed the mouthpiece of the British Government. The true regeneration of India will come, not from the priesthood, but from the British. We are labouring to that end : patiently, slowly, cautiously — perhaps too cautiously ; I admit that. But what is our object in introducing British institutions into India ? It is to enable her in due time to govern herself in the manner of a British Colony, Canada or Australia, though still a part of the British Empire. Nay, I shall go further : no earthly tie can be permanent, and the time must come when India will be prepared for her complete independence. In that hour Great Britain will grant it in peace and friendship. Her sole reward will remain in India’s gratitude, a reward unique in human history ; for the labour of regenerating an ancient people that gave the beginning of wisdom to the human race will in itself be unique. I shall close

with Queen Victoria's words : ' In their gratitude shall be Our reward.' "

At the mention of Queen Victoria's name all present bowed. Then Vashista looked up.

" And there is not one single statesman in Britain to-day who honestly believes that ! " he cried, " Words and bluff again. You are accustomed to make ' promises to the ear ' which you intend to ' break to the hope.' Read your very best London papers to-day : ' India was won by the sword '—which is an ignorant falsehood unpardonable in a Board-school boy—' and must be held by the sword.' " And Melnor felt that Britain's cause in the hour of her deepest peril might be ruined by her very best newspapers. " Somewhere between this earth and Nirvana there is a special hell for those that make promises to the ear and break them to the hope—alike the betrayers of women and betrayers of nations. I have done with your promises ! " With that the High Priest concluded.

" But not I ! " Barath answered. He turned to Nora. " Will you labour with me, if need be come to England with me to plead India's cause ? "

Nora arose and bowed her head. " I will."

" Then I shall win back my people ! " Barath cried in sudden hope. His throne was tottering : he would uphold it even now. " Harnam, call the people."

The large door was flung wide open, and Harnam went out. He returned with the feudal nobles, the leaders of the rabble horde, and of the multitude men of all classes and callings. They stood along the wall three deep.

" My people, I would speak with you," Barath said, standing before his throne. Nora and Melnor stood

on either side to strengthen him. "Let me begin by depicting what Britain has done for India, at least for the last fifty years when the period of consolidation began. She has given us internal peace. To a generation brought up in tranquillity that may not seem much, nevertheless it is a priceless blessing and the beginning of all other blessings. Again, she has given us the possibility of adopting what is best in Western institutions. Japan has indeed done that for herself, but Japan was an independent country. We were not; at least we were independent of each other, but fighting each other. Thirdly, during the last fifty years the spirit of nationalism has first been begotten in India. That is due directly to the British by the work of consolidation; indirectly also—for even in their errors, when we saw injustices, we were aroused to a fellow-feeling with those who had suffered. That was an element in nationalism. Let us give even that credit to the British as being in that an instrument of fate. Are not these blessings great enough—peace, the possibility of material progress, and the spirit of nationalism?" Barath paused. But his people were silent.

His heart began to sink. He would make an effort on another line.

"My people, I would depict the future. I would show you the prosperity awaiting Barathpur and all India in one generation, if the connection with Britain continues. By that time the irrigation system of India will have been completed—I shall see to it that it is, telling the British Government to allot more to it than at present—and then there will be an abundance of corn to feed all India, with grain elevators at every wayside station to carry off the remainder and flood the

markets of Europe. Also, our vast mineral wealth, as yet untapped, will startle the world. We shall do everything cheaper than any place on earth, harnessing our waterfalls to produce electricity, and also our splendid tidal rivers. India will then be the most prosperous country on earth, and the frugality, the industry, the sobriety of her people will count for much in her making. All this if the connection with Britain continues.

“Would have more? Would have triumphs in matters intellectual? In Science? Then a new Galileo, a Newton, a Pascal, will come out of India. For we have the materials. . . . In Art? Then a new Rembrandt, a Velasquez, will come forth out of India. Remember that there were Indian painters at the Courts of Jehangir and Shah Jahan whom these monarchs delighted to honour. . . . Would have poetry? Remember Kalidas. Remember Valmiki—whose equal Europe has not seen. Behold, we shall have a new incarnation of Valmiki. . . . And all these if the peace continues guaranteed by the presence of the British.”

Barath paused. But again his people were silent. For the demons of hell had done their work, and hate and rage and violence were bearing fruit. The fine work of peace and begotten nationalism and the possibility of material progress were all forgotten. Instead were remembered the supercilious glance and the casual word that nevertheless had hurt to the deepest heart—to say nothing of intended arrogance: for India still lived by sentiment, not by mountains of gold. Barath felt that Vashista's denial of Melnor's presentment of Britain's future intentions was now destroying his last hope.

“My people, let me yet plead with you. Do you not yet believe that Britain means well by us? Do you still judge by casual officials? What of the people of Great Britain? Do they not see India, think India, dream India, daily? Is not everything Indian to them romantic, mysterious, fascinating? Lord Melnor has said that India may yet have self-government. I shall go further. Do you realise what will happen in forty more years? Germany will then have a population of a hundred millions, the United States a hundred and fifty millions; Great Britain only fifty-five millions. *She will then be under sentence of death as a great Power—unless she appeals to India.*”

“And then the British will no longer call themselves our conquerors, but our blood-brothers!” Vashista cried. “Now they forget that the high-caste Hindu is of the same Aryan descent as themselves, only a trifle purer.”

“Even so,” Barath continued. “To turn pride into the feeling of friendship and brotherhood is a noble mission. Read again India’s mission to the world,” he said to Vashista personally, then turned to the assembly. “My people, I would plead with you to aid me in restoring India’s true mission. It is not to begin the invasion of Europe—for the westward movement, if begun in India, might spread through Asia. Alone, of all countries of the earth, no invasion has ever gone forth from India, except the invasion of a religion—a religion of universal brotherhood, universal peace, universal love. Would you seek a New Krishna, or instead a New Buddha? It is written in our books that the next era of the world will be the era of Altruism, in which one of two countries will fulfil the final mission :

what those countries are we know not yet, except that the signs point to Siberia or the United States of America. But the first work of the mission, to impose universal peace, will begin in India—as every world-mission has.

“You have said that some day India shall be independent,” Barath spoke to Melnor a moment, then turned again to his people. “Then we shall have here the United States of India: federated, perchance under the House of Rama, but each under its own dynasty. In that hour, with the material and intellectual supremacy we have already depicted, and the population increased to four or five hundred millions, India shall impose her will upon the world—peace. She will range herself on the side of the weak ones of the earth, and check the disturbers of peace, the pirates and marauders among nations. That will be the beginning of the millennium, of the Era of Altruism. Does the prospect please you, my people? The prospect of your country’s future glory?”

The assembly looked to Vashista for guidance.

“All that is based on India’s independence,” the High Priest of Vishnu said to the assembly. “And when Britain voluntarily grants independence to India we shall all be dead, and our children and children’s children. That is our plea for beginning the work of independence now—this hour.” And the assembly silently bowed their heads in assent.

“Then hear my last appeal,” Barath cried to his people. “Would you have me be the New Buddha now—or if you will, the New Krishna, not in conquest, but in love? Love for all earth?”

Once in a life-time there comes to every man a thought upon which he could never improve. So it was with

Barath in that hour when his throne was crumbling to dust. Mighty Krishna had a supreme throne, but he was also the moral teacher of his people.

Barath's face shone with a new light. He closed his eyes in contemplation. His lips began to move inaudibly, then words came forth. The voice of the Spirit was in his ear, prompting him. Who but he deserved such aid in the supreme crisis of his life—who but Barath, that had kept his heart undefiled ?

“ My people, do not rage. There is no room for rage, but for love.

“ Forgive the West. Though the West has crucified the East, yet forgive the West. Forgive all things that you may understand all things.

“ Seek the success of life not in life, but in death. The pleasure of dying without pain is worth the pain of living without pleasure.

“ Forgive the West even because of your own greatness. The art of dying is greater than the art of living. The West knows how to live, the East how to die.

“ Forgive the West yet again. The sun of eternal truth arises in the East to shine upon the West. The East is the beginning of human thought.

“ Would you have more ? Then I say unto you : blessed are you that wipe away the tears of others, for your own tears shall be wiped away.

“ Blessed are you that, seeking your own just happiness, give up that search because of the pain it might inflict upon another ; for even in the hour that you have abandoned your happiness you shall have found it.

“ Would you have more ? Then I say unto you that if an insect sting you, and you in anger close your hand

upon it to crush it, then open your hand and let it go. What is the pain of the sting in proportion to the life of the insect? The life is all that it has. If you can but kill it or let it go, it behoves you to let it go.

“Yet more? Then if a murderer come to kill you with a drawn sword, and you have a pistol in your hand and raise it to shoot him dead at your feet, I say unto you: cast away the pistol and let the murderer kill you. For then your soul which is in peace will find nirvana; but if you kill the murderer, who already has sin in his heart, his soul will pass through a thousand wanderings in toil and pain.

“And all these things shall be fulfilled on the earth at that Era of Altruism. *Now* does the prospect please you, my people—that if you choose you may practise all these things in this present life and incarnation?”

The High Priest of Vishnu had said that Barath was destined to be the teacher of his teachers. Barath was so now: for he had given them ideals and world-truths unknown before, even to the East.

But even the hour of supreme teaching was now past—or had not yet dawned upon the earth. The men of Barathpur looked to the High Priest of Vishnu for guidance: and the High Priest looked at Nora and Melnor standing beside Barath—and was silent.

Then Barath, noting Vashista's glance at Nora and Melnor, felt the last prop taken away from beneath his throne. For uphold it even now—aye, place it still higher—by denying Britain, denying Nora, he would not.

“What more can I say to you, what more can I do?” he cried in bitterness. “From the morning watch even unto night I have laboured for you, schemed for you,

lived for you, and in the hours of night have dreamt for you. Then why would you do this to me ?"—he opened wide the palms of his hands. "Answer me, my people, answer me !"

But they were silent.

"To the poor and the oppressed I have brought justice and reparation, full measure and a hundred-fold. The widow and the orphan I have visited, and if they could not come to me for justice I have gone to them. Then why would you do this to me ? Answer me, my people, answer me !"

But they were silent.

"In pain and sorrow and anguish I have watched over you and comforted you, and with my own tears have washed away yours. A hundred tears of others I have wiped away, and a hundred wounds I have healed : and if in the midnight hour I heard distant cries of pain that I could not heal, I have wept. I have loved all the people of the earth, even the leper and the fallen. I was a father to the fatherless, and a child to the childless ; an eye to the blind, a foot to the lame, a hand to the maimed. What more could I have been to you that I was not ? Answer me, my people, answer me !"

But his people were silent.

Then something burst in Barath's heart. He heard a distant roar of voices, drawing nearer, nearer : it sounded to him like the fall of pinnacles and citadels—the fall of his world around him.

He grew suddenly calm. He took up the packet his personal attendant had placed beside the throne, and undid the shawl wrapper. It was a sandal-wood box. He opened it and brought out from it a gar-

land of strange flowers, now faded and withered. He held it up to Vashista's gaze.

"Thou hast seen this garland in gold in the hands of the image of my unknown wife," Barath said to Vashista, then turned to Nora. "But with this garland in living flowers she chose me for her *swayamvara*." He faced Nora full.

"Do you now ask me to redeem the pledge of the garland?" he said to her.

Nora bowed her head. "I do."

Barath placed the garland around his neck. "Then we shall stand together though the world falls around us."

He faced Vashista. "High Priest of Vishnu, thou hast our final answer." In that he included Nora.

Vashista was dumbfounded—for a brief moment. He knew nothing of Nora's choice with the garland in living flowers. But the roar of the multitude loosened his tongue.

"Then you *shall* see the world fall around you!"

The populace in the courtyard was now hushed in silence: instead was heard the wail of suppliants. A car, drawn slowly by forty men in saffron robes, came in sight beyond the terrace from the palace side. As the terrace was only a few feet from the ground, the top of the car was level with it. Standing upon the car was Rani Delini.

She wore a long white robe. Her hair was loosened and hanging down. Her face was unveiled: for she was no longer a mortal. She stood motionless, gazing before her, with hands joined at her breast.

The multitude on the terrace saluted her. "The suttee, the suttee! Behold the Devi!"

The populace below answered : " Victory, victory to the Devi ! "

Then all fell on their faces and were silent.

In the throne-room the assembly prostrated themselves, facing Delini. All but Barath, Nora, Melnor, and Vashista. Barath, Nora, and Melnor stood still, bowing their heads. The High Priest of Vishnu faced Delini and raised his hands.

" Soul of Savitri, heart of Sita—be sanctified, be glorified ! " he intoned. "*Sach-chitananda, sach-chitananda !* It lives, it lives—the Flame Divine—in thee, O Devi ! *Sach-chitananda, sach-chitananda !* "

Then a sudden hush fell upon them all, whilst yet the car was half-way past the terrace. Beyond the car were the suppliants.

" Cure ! Cure ! Cure ! " they wailed.

The car passed the first suppliant, a blind man. He held up his hands, crying : " Give me my sight, give me my sight ! "

The car passed the second suppliant, a cripple on crutches. Supported by a comrade, he held up the crutches. " Give me my limbs, O Goddess, give me my limbs that I may walk ! "

The third suppliant was a woman. She had lost her child that very morn. She held up the body in a bundle. " Put life into it, O Goddess Mother, put life into it that I be comforted ! "

And so on before all the suppliants the car passed. The multitude on the terrace flocked out, joined the populace below, and followed the car.

With the last vision of Delini from the throne-room the High Priest intoned again : "*Sach-chitananda, sach-chitananda !* "

Then the assembly prostrate there arose to their feet.

Three tongues of fire leapt skywards from the citadel of the palace, and the ruddy glow was visible from the corridor adjoining the throne-room.

"The call, brothers, the call!" Chandra Sena cried to his men. "The beacon light, the fiery *chakra*!"

Barath was still ruler and master there. "Who has lit it without my command?" he sternly asked.

From the large door there stepped forth Ramanand and the priests who had proclaimed the divinity of Barath in that self-same hall. But now they did not carry the garlands of homage; only the braziers of incense.

"I have lit the beacon light," Ramanand answered in defiance.

"I command you all begone!" Barath said to him and the priests.

"And I command you all stay!" the High Priest replied. ❧

"Chandra Sena, remove these men!" Barath appealed to the commander of his forces.

"I have donned the saffron robe," the commander of his forces replied.

"Even now wilt thou yield?" Vashista asked Barath.

"For the last time, no!" Barath answered calmly.

"Then our friendship is ended!" Vashista said. He picked up his garment at the lowermost end before his feet, and slowly rent it upwards. "I am no longer thy *guru*, but the High Priest of Vishnu. Dost realise my power as such?"

"Chandra Sena, I appeal again to your oath of allegiance," Barath said to the commander of his

forces in English. "Call your men to stand to their duty. You were educated in Europe and will be faithful to us."

"But I have no bond with Europe," Chandra answered in English, looking at Nora.

"You too cast that at me!" Barath cried from the depth of his bitterness. "Then indeed has treason prospered! High Priest of Vishnu, do thy worst!" Saying that, Barath drew his choga of cloth-of-gold around him, placed the point of his sword on the dais, and rested his hands upon the hilt. He stood erect, cold and full of dignity.

∴ Vashista strode up to the priests, and placed himself at their head, with Ramanand on his right. Each priest took a handful of incense from his girdle and threw it upon the brazier.

Standing before the throne, Vashista threw up his arms.

"In the name of Mighty Vishnu——"

Then something snapped in Nora's heart. "Cease!"—it was a cry of concentrated anguish that escaped her lips. All along she had been silent, save to give the few words of assent to Barath's appeal to her.

Vashista lowered his arms a moment. "Wilt thou obey even now?" he asked Barath. He had said "yield" before.

For an answer Barath silently gave his right hand to Nora. She took it in her own, and silently held it. Thus together they received the sentence.

Vashista flung up his arms in curse:—

"In the name of Mighty Vishnu be accurst! A prince no longer, but a pariah! Out of the caste, out of the brotherhood, henceforth, forever! Fire shall

deny its warmth to thee, water its solace. The fruits of the earth be sour to thy lips : the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, as carrion flesh ! Over thy heart shall come a leanness, freezing thy joys to bitterness ; and thou shalt roam the earth seeking death—but death shall flee from thee. Fire shall not harm thee, the sword shall not touch thee : plague and pestilence and famine shall pass thee by ; thunder and earthquake shall harm thee not, and Time shall spare thee its crooked scythe. But a demon of hell shall consume thee with fire in thy heart and fire in thy brain—till thou shalt shriek for death, in vain ! ”

Paralysed, petrified, by the curse, Harnam and the guards of the palace had looked in vain to Barath for a word of command. Now without the command they rushed towards the throne—but the High Priest turned swiftly, and faced them with uplifted arms.

“ By the curse of Vishnu, stand back ! ” he bade them. And the guards fell back in terror at the might of Vishnu.

“ I absolve ye from your allegiance,” the High Priest said to them. “ He is a changeling and not his father’s son : no longer your master, but an outcast.” Then only, when too late, could Moolraj reach the palace : faithful Moolraj that was about his master’s business, trying to stem the march of the saffron-robed men.

He came in by the corridor, stood a moment beneath the arches dazed and bewildered, seeing the crowd of priests—then rushed headlong upon the High Priest with uplifted sword. Vashista stood silent and scornful ; but the priests, headed by Ramanand, marched on him with uplifted braziers.

“ By the curse of Vishnu ! ” Ramanand cried.

"The curse of Vishnu!" the priests answered.

Step by step they forced Moolraj back to the corridor.

Moolraj flung up his arms towards Barath. "My Master, I am impotent!" he cried in anguish.

Suddenly he broke through the line of priests, sprang to the foot of the throne, and held up his sword horizontally before his knee.

"My sword cannot serve thee, my Master," he cried bitterly. "But it shall no other."

He snapped it in twain across his knee, flung the pieces at Vashista's feet, rushed towards the corridor—paused, ran back to the throne impetuously, sank on his knees, kissed his master's hand passionately, and stood up to Vashista.

"When thou and I are in hell I shall wreak my vengeance upon thee, thou damned priest!" Saying this, he fled from the throne-room in frenzy.

The line of priests wheeled round, marched to the throne, and stood before it.

"I said, I have absolved ye from your allegiance."

The guards trembled under the High Priest's gaze. Headed by Harnam they came to the foot of the dais, and deposited their swords respectfully before Barath—but Harnam broke his first. Saluting, they turned and departed by the corridor.

Of the civilians of the palace there was Madhava and Vindara. They stood before the dais, salaamed profoundly to Barath, then turned to Vashista.

"Had I known that this was thy final aim," Madhava said to him, "I would have fought the British instead with my sword, aye, to fall on the field of Jhansi."

"Had I known that this was thy alternative purpose," Vindara said to Vashista, "I would have opposed the

British Government instead at Calcutta, openly, directly."

Saying this, they departed.

The High Priest turned to the assembly that had gathered there. "I say for the third time I absolve ye all from your allegiance."

The assembly silently departed. The priests dashed their braziers at the foot of the throne.

The High Priest faced Melnor. "Hildebrand has not failed!" he said in triumph.

At the head of the priests he walked to the door, paused, and looked at Barath keenly.

"We shall meet again—at Canossa!"

Barath stood silent and still, with Nora and Melnor beside him. The throne-room was deserted.

Then two men and two women crept in. They prostrated themselves before the throne. The first man was the peasant whose petition Barath had granted the self-same day.

The second spoke with his face to the floor: "I am he to whom thou didst give justice from the grain-merchant."

The first woman, old and poor, was unveiled. "I am she to whom thou didst give justice from the milk-seller."

The other woman was young and veiled. "I was a widow before I was a wife: thy new merciful law has given me hope of wifehood, motherhood."

Barath looked at them. "Are you all that remain of my kingdom?"

In answer they knocked their heads thrice on the floor.

"Go in peace!" Barath said to them.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE TEMPLE OF VISHNU

At nightfall two of the suppliants sought the Temple of Vishnu, which was outside the capital. The first was the blind man, the second the cripple—but without his crutches.

“Rest thy arms upon my shoulders,” the first suppliant said to the second. “I shall be thy limbs.”

“And I shall be thine eyes,” the cripple answered.

“Then direct me.”

Thus they came to the Temple. The building was vast, and the gardens extensive. They passed through the gardens and came to the large door at the front ; it was closed. To the right of the Temple, high up towards the chief altar, was the door for sanctuary : it could be opened from the outside at all hours. But the door for suppliants was on the left.

They came to it, and found it closed. They stood before it, on either side of the middle wicket, the cripple supporting himself on the door. The blind man raised up his hands, crying, “Supplication ! Supplication !”

The cripple responded, “Supplication ! Supplication !”

Thus three times. Then the wicket opened, and Ramanand stood at the gap. He and Vashista had quitted the palace, and had come to dwell at the Temple.

"This is not the hour of supplication, but of sanctuary alone," Ramanand said to the suppliants.

"We seek to be the first to pray at Devi Delini's shrine," they answered.

"Devi Delini's ashes have been ~~only~~ gathered, but are not yet enshrined. Come on the morrow."

Ramanand withdrew, closing the wicket. The suppliants huddled down by the door, awaiting the morrow.

"I count the hours that will complete my cure," said the cripple. "My sins were great in a former incarnation."

"My sins were greater," his companion answered. "It is not sufficient that I have witnessed the Devi's martyrdom, sightless that I am; nor perhaps sufficient to pray at her shrine. I shall come a second and a third time, if need be."

"Aye, or even await another suttee."

"There will be no more suttee in Barathpur—in our time," the blind man answered, shaking his head. "There have been strange happenings in the city to-day, and seeing nothing I have heard all—every whispering, every muttering. Perhaps what thou hast seen is not more than what I have heard."

"I have seen enough—may I never live to see this day again! The populace, roused to an unprecedented fervour by this one suttee within living memory, would have hailed the Prince as a god had he chosen to proclaim himself. They were in the mood to make a god—or to destroy one."

"And likewise the hundred and twenty thousand men in saffron robes. They had resolved to die for the Prince—and instead I heard their clamouring when it

was known that he had refused to place himself at their head. 'To Delhi, to Delhi—lead us to Delhi!' they shouted to Chandra Sena."

"Aye, and Chandra raged in sullen fury, saying nothing," the cripple answered. "I saw him face the army. Thrice he made to speak—and thrice his rage denied him utterance. Then as the troops with fixed bayonets were swaying with some mad purpose, he found his tongue. 'To what end, my men?' he bitterly cried. 'Our Prince has failed us—for the love of the British!'"

"Yea, seeing nothing, I heard and felt the army surging with pent-up passion. 'To Delhi, to Delhi—we will proclaim him in his absence!' they shouted to the heavens."

"And then Chandra Sena cursed them all. 'Go home, ye senseless people!' he cried in impotent rage; 'disband!'"

"And then, though I saw nothing, I heard strange sounds in the sudden silence. What were they?"

"Chandra Sena broke his sword, and hurled the pieces at the army, muttering bitterly, 'For the love of the British!' Then he walked away."

"And the army?"

"In sullen rage they still stand, drawing their saffron robes tight around them. But there seems no purpose. Verily, this has been a day of failures. The British have failed, the Prince has failed. The High Priest alone has triumphed."

"Perhaps his has been the greatest failure of all—the failure of his entire life and destiny, because of the Prince's failure to accept *his* highest destiny as the New Krishna. But I do not see how the British have

failed," the blind man added. "They won the Prince to their country's cause."

"They have failed to avert the curse. For even as their friend and under the protection of the Imperial Government, the Prince can do nothing in Barathpur while the curse is still upon him. And to withdraw it he must humble himself."

"There is an alternative—death! A noble death. To give back his life voluntarily to Vishnu, the progenitor of his ancestor Rama. The Japanese commit hari-kari rather than submit to dishonour: we can do better than that by sacrificing our life at Vishnu's altar."

Awhile later the darkness of night increased.

"Brother, a shadow is creeping upon us!" the cripple cried in terror. "Can it be the shadow of death?"

"The shadow of death will be over the Prince's heart, not thine," the blind man answered.

"Thy words comfort me. It is merely the darkness of night. Brother, let us sleep awhile."

They slept, huddled together. . . .

The midnight hour had struck from the watch-tower of the citadel, and the palace was wrapt in silence. A solitary figure stole out into the garden. It was Barath. He wore a long cloak over his dress.

At the porch before the inner palace, where he had met Suvona for the first time on his returning, he took out a letter and placed it upon the marble seat. The message was brief:—

"Sister, sister, sister, a thousand times sister, what

reparation can I make to thee? There is but one! Farewell, my sister, farewell!"

He passed through the Jasmine Garden, the Lotus Garden, and stood a moment beside the stream. The lamp of his life was still suspended upon the ledge—he felt that, though he could not see it. Bowing his head, he passed on by the public exit by the stream.

Then he heard a muffled sound behind him, saw a swift-coming shadow follow him, reach him. There at his feet it fell prone upon the dust, bathing his feet in tears between broken sobs.

Barath raised him in his arms, saying, "Weep not for me, my brother."

"O my Master, my Master!" was all that Moolraj could say.

"Henceforth I am thy master no more, but thy brother."

Then the sobs wrung Moolraj's heart with tenfold violence.

"I go where none should follow me," Barath said to him: "it is better that I should go. Dost thou love me? Dost thou love me well? Then weep no more. Dost thou love me more than all things? Then promise me this: *thou hast seen nothing, heard nothing.*" Barath laid his right hand upon Moolraj's head.

Sinking upon his knees, and hushing his sobs suddenly, Moolraj murmured, "I have seen nothing, heard nothing. I am blind, I am deaf, I am dumb."

"It is well. Now, go back to the palace. At the porch there is a letter sealed with my signet-ring. Bid a woman of the palace deliver it to the Princess. Now go in peace."

But Moolraj cast himself at Barath's feet, and cried out in agony, "Thou didst give me a ring before thy throne. Take it back—lest I be tempted to use it now." Faithful to the last, blind in his devotion, Moolraj had heard his master say it was better that he should go—though poor Moolraj knew not why it was better.

"But instead give me something, even if it be the latchet of thy shoe," he sobbed. "Am I to lose my Master? What sin have I committed to lose my Master—I and my fourteen incarnations before me? What shall I live by, hope by, pray by—I and my children, and children's children? Give us something for a memory: to keep, to place among our gods, to worship."

"Keep the ring I have given thee, and this also. In days of tribulation use them with Princes and rulers. Now go in peace."

"In days of tribulation we shall cling to them, I and my children, and children's children." Kissing his master's feet, Moolraj departed.

In the midnight hour Suvona and Nora were drawn together in grief. Receiving Barath's last message, a vague terror surged over Suvona's heart. Then all too clearly the meaning of Barath's words dawned upon her. Yes, there was but one reparation he could make!

"He is gone to his death!"—Suvona's cry of anguish went out to Nora.

"Death?" Nora could scarcely realise it so suddenly.

"Yes, death! Who can save him—who but thou?"

"I? I am powerless!"

"Thou art all powerful. I love him beyond all earth—but he loves thee beyond all earth."

"How can I save him, even if I come with you?"

"By yielding him up to me!" answered Suvona.
"Wouldst *thou* stand between him and his destiny—what remains of it? Canst thou help him to fulfil it? Is thy love for him so selfish? If he can resign his throne, his very life, for *thy* sake, canst thou make no sacrifice in return?"

A fierce struggle was in Nora's heart. Then light was accorded her. "Selfish? Is my love selfish?"

"Come, my sister, hesitate no more! It is a woman's part to make the sacrifice."

Nora stood still, but her hands trembled. She held them out involuntarily, seeking support. Suvona took them in her own, held them. . . .

"Suvona, you have conquered!" Then Nora's voice broke down pitifully. "But I also am a dreamer. And my one dream you have spoiled, the one love of my life you have made void. Yes, it is a woman's part to make the sacrifice. Thus ends my dream!" . . . Slowly she took off the scarf she wore—Barath's gift to her, the badge of her betrothal, the chief emblem of her bridal robes to be. "Now take me to him! that I may save him. Quick, or my strength fails!"

"God bless thee, my sister! Come!"

Thus they came to the Temple of Vishnu.

Then the gloom deepened. Perchance it was a black cloud covering up the stars. They could not find the entrance.

"A darkness comes over me!" Suvona cried out in anguish. "Are we too late? My heart ceases to beat! . . . Give me hope, my heart, give me hope! It

is but the deepest gloom of night ! Who will guide our path ? ”

The suppliants awoke at her cry.

“ To me night is day, and day is night,” the blind man said. “ Follow me.”

The cripple placed his hands upon his companion’s shoulders.

“ Brother, now I shall be thy limbs, and eyes also,” the blind man added, leading the way.

Barath entered the Temple of Vishnu by the door for sanctuary. Approaching the altar, he laid aside the long cloak, and stood before the image of Vishnu in full regalia.

“ O Mighty Vishnu, I come to thee with my last prayer. Progenitor of my ancestor, from thy house shall come forth the new incarnation of Krishna. *I* am of thy house, thy blood, thy fullest lineage ; but in this generation I was not worthy—I do not hold the soul of Krishna. Thus let me die so as to hasten my returning in a new incarnation.”

He undid his sword-belt, and placed his sword in scabbard upon the altar ; likewise his jewelled turban. “ Take back thy heritage : my sword, my crown.” Then his choga of cloth-of-gold. “ And my robe of state.”

Thus divested of his princehood, he stood in contemplation.

On either side of the large statue was a silver cup for oblation, and a small slab for offerings in front. The font for sacrificial water at the far end of the sanctuary was dimly visible in the flickering light of the swinging lamp overhead. The door behind the statue, leading to the priests’ quarters, was invisible.

Barath brought out two phials from his bosom. The contents of the first he poured into the cup at the right hand. "To thee, O Vishnu, a libation of *amrith*, the Rajput's wine."

The second he poured into the left cup. "To my own lips the cup of oblivion."

He knelt down before the statue, and bowed his head on the slab: preparing his last thoughts before the sacrifice.

Silently the door behind the statue opened. Ramand came forth. Standing behind the statue, he stretched out a hand on either side, and exchanged the cups. As silently he departed, closing the door softly.

Barath arose from his knees, made obeisance, and took up the cup on the right.

"O Vishnu, O Parameshwar, I pour thee a last oblation of *amrith* such as my ancestors offered thee for forty centuries. Unworthy as I am, deign to accept it now from me, the last of thy house." He poured the cup upon the slab.

He took up the other cup. "Come to my lips, sweet nectar! I drink to my oblivion!"

He drank, dashed the cup away, reeled, steadied himself.

"What strange fire is this coursing through my veins? Is it the molten fire of death burning my vitals? . . ." He closed his eyes. "Yes, death—merciful death!" . . .

He sank on his knees. "It comes, it comes! The merciful torpor of death creeps over my limbs, my heart, my throat—mounts to my brain! . . ."

A look of fear came into his eyes, then doubt, suspicion. He realised. He sprang to his feet.

“ Treason ! Treason ! It is not the agony of death, but the frenzy of the Rajput’s wine ! O pitiless god, thou hast cheated me ! ”

He rushed to the slab, scooped up the poison with his hands, and put it to his lips. . . . He reeled, sank slowly on his knees. . . .

“ Yes, *this* is death. . . . Delini, Delini, thou hast not died in vain ! Thy spirit hovers above me, strengthening me to my end. . . . Ah, and the spirits of my fourscore ancestors ! ” He gazed before him.

“ They pass in procession before me ! Rama ! Krishna ! Vikra-maditya ! ” A sudden joy leapt to his eyes. “ And thou, Prithiraj ? ”

In that joy he made a supreme effort : tottered to his feet.

“ I see thee beneath Delhi’s burning wall in thy last sortie. Fight on, Prithiraj, fight the accursed foe to the death ! Behold, thy noble Queen, Sanjogini, stands upon the wall. When the foeman’s sword reaches thy heart, she will hurl herself into the flames. . . . Nora, Nora, you are Sanjogini, I am Prithiraj ! ”

Then in the frenzy of death he fought anew the last battle of Prithiraj beneath Delhi.

“ Nora, Nora, mount the burning wall ! See, see, Rama, Arjuna, the very gods of Meru, gaze upon me ! Mighty Krishna lends me his sword, Indra in his fiery chariot fights on my right, Karna with his javelin upon my left. Charge, Rajputs, charge—follow me to death ! ”

He reeled, clutched at his heart. “ Ah, the foeman’s sword is in my heart ! Nora, leap into the flames—join me in death ! ”

He swayed gently to and fro. “ I have launched

my bark upon the bosom of the deep, come what may. Farewell, farewell, fare——” The word unfinished, he fell prone upon the floor. . . .

In the stillness Ramanand came forth. He looked at the body.

“It is not death, but a swoon : there was not enough to kill thee. Lie there, O feeble mortal, till they come to claim thee !”

The third watch was ending. Suvona and Nora entered by the door for sanctuary, the door that was ever open, close to the altar.

“Am I too late ?” Suvona’s heart stood still. She gazed at the body. She bent over it, knelt down, held Barath in her arms, gazing into his face.

“Couldst thou not spare me a single drop ? Cruel Barath ! Wouldst leave me behind ?”

In passion she pressed her lips to his, and sipped the poison.

Barath stirred in her arms. A look of fear, hope, suspense, surged over her face. “Be still, my heart, be still ! Wouldst deceive me with false hope ?”

She looked keenly into his face. “He breathes, he lives !” She turned her head to Nora. “My sister, help !”

Nora took her handkerchief, dipped it in the sacrificial font, and gave it to Suvona, standing behind her. Suvona bathed Barath’s face and lips.

Barath opened his eyes. “Art thou the angel of death come to me in Suvona’s guise to rebuke me—or is she dead, and thou art her ghost ?”

“Why seek the living among the dead ? I am Suvona’s very self.”

With an effort Barath disengaged himself from Suvona's arms.

"My sister, help!" Suvona cried to Nora. "Give him back to me!"

Nora knelt beside Suvona. "Take her," she said to Barath. "Hers is the greater love."

It was only then that Barath realised fully Delini's reproach to him for her rescue from her husband's pyre—that when she had passed through the conscious pains of death, she had awaked to find herself snatched back to earth. What she had suffered then he suffered now.

What mattered what happened to him now? He bowed his head. "It is consummated! So let it be."

Suvona kissed Nora in gratitude, but found no words. . . .

The first grey dawn was trickling in through the sanctuary door. In the dim light Suvona saw the High Priest and his companions coming to the altar by the door behind the statue of Vishnu.

"Father, recall the curse?" she asked the High Priest.

"For thy sake," Vashista answered, bowing his head, "and the sake of him that shall be born of thee."

Solemnly, with the fullest rites, he recalled the curse before the altar of Vishnu.

Then the swift dawn grew brighter. At the open sanctuary door Melnor stood; he had come to escort Nora. She was going to him, but paused at the door.

"And you English, hear my last message!" the High Priest said to them. "It is I that have failed, not you! Barath never had that supreme destiny: or if he had, *you* have made it void. I shall not see what I have lived for, longed for—the coming of the

New Krishna. Be happy, be happy, for this one generation—till he that is born of them”—he extended his hands over Barath and Suvona—“shall sit upon his father’s throne. Then accept your doom and vanquishment. In that hope I shall die.”

But Suvona ran to Nora and kissed her again. “Let the future decide the future : in this life be my sister. Return to me in the years to come with thy children and children’s children, and dwell with me till death. Yes, my sister, thy love has conquered ! Henceforth I too am thy country’s friend ! When the peril comes to England on her Eastern shore, a million of our sons will hasten to her rescue. I shall labour to that end.”

Nora struggled inwardly, silently. Turning suddenly, she put her arms round Suvona. Held in each other’s embrace they stood a moment, pouring out their hearts to each other. Then with bowed head Nora turned to depart. But even as she was crossing the threshold, she paused trembling, clutching the door. Suvona ran to her, held her, kissed her for the third time : then led her to her uncle. Thus Nora departed.

The first ray of dawn now reached the altar. Barath and Suvona knelt together, the priests standing behind them. The High Priest stood at the altar, facing the dawn.

“Hail, morning light ! Send thy ray of repentance into our hearts. Quench forever the darkness of yester-night—the darkness in this sanctuary and the darkness in the palace hall.”

Then he and the priests began the morning hymn of hope and mercy and comfort.

CHAPTER XL

THE COMING OF THE NEW BUDDHA

At the Mutiny of 1857 the troops of Gwalior implored their ruler to lead them out to join forces with the heroic Queen of Jhansi: and her cause might have aroused active sympathy elsewhere in India. But the ruler of Gwalior sided with the East India Company.

In like manner the revolution at Barathpur, deprived of Barath's sanction, was deprived of its cause of existence. It failed because of Barath's love for England.

The army of a hundred and twenty thousand men lay encamped for three days; then as there was no further object in their waiting, they tore off their saffron robes and disbanded. The twenty thousand of the usual standing army returned to their quarters; the rest, composed of reserves, went to their homes.

The Imperial Government never heard of the intended revolution. It was too busy for several days restoring its own communications and checking disturbances in its own territories. And afterwards Melnor decided not to mention it—for the ultimate benefit of Britain and India alike.

But he resigned his brief Residency and returned to England, a sadder and a wiser man. He entered Parliament again, in the House of Commons; for the

relative, to whose peerage he was the heir, was still living.

He now teaches a new lesson to the House of Commons ; for he can see Indian affairs not only with English eyes but also Indian. He practises the lessons himself, those he learnt in India so painfully. Yes, he would rather see Britain just than Britain great : but much more see her great by being just. He remembers Barath's words.

Above all he remembers Barath's pregnant words that in forty more years Britain may have need of India : which vision of the future might have been accorded to none save Barath. Warned by that vision Melnor now tries to arouse his slumbering countrymen—that they may prepare the way even now for a stronger bond between Britain and India : a bond of mutual understanding, appreciation, goodwill.

Some day, when he succeeds to the peerage, he hopes to go to India as its Viceroy. He will then inaugurate a new era in which the position of the great rulers classed as " friends and allies " by treaty will be guaranteed and maintained : as in Beaconsfield's scheme, they will be " Sovereign Princes " co-ordinated with the British power, and while regarding their Emperor with ardent affection and devotion as their head, they will also feel that as untrammelled rulers in their own territories they have a stake in the British Empire just because of their co-ordination.

In British India Melnor hopes that the new era will be such that the legitimate aspirations of the people will be satisfied, not with a stinted hand and too late, but amply, generously, a year and a day before they need be. An era also of material progress—which again has been foreshadowed by Barath : an era of irrigation

canals and grain elevators, of waterfalls and tidal rivers yielding electricity to put to the service of man the vast natural resources of India as yet untouched : in fine, an era of prosperity, contentment, happiness—an era of goodwill and friendship and ardent affection for Britain, through whose guidance all these will come to pass. Remembering Barath's words of prophecy, Melnor now labours to fulfil that mission : one of the noblest an Englishman can have. Thus, long before the forty years are over, before the coming of Britain's own deepest peril, India will be the most ultra-British portion of the British Empire—in partnership.

And Nora ? Like Ellen, has she to wait long before finding rest and comfort ? Nay, already there is a peace and comfort in her heart that the world cannot give : for now she knows that it was her coming to Barathpur that saved her country's cause. That was her destiny.

Yet an active mission still awaits her. Her life has been too hallowed to bestow upon a man or a single community. Some day she too may return to India to inaugurate a new era for the women of India, so that they may again participate in the active deeds of their country, as they did before the coming of the Moslems—when indeed they were ahead of the women of Europe of that period in freedom, in intellectual culture, aye, in the making of history. To turn back the hand of Time for eight centuries for the women of India is Nora's future mission. It is the noblest an Englishwoman can have. . . .

A humble woman has humbly shared in the events that have been chronicled ; but she too was necessary. Poor Kamona's ardent and unwise love for Madhava

might have proved a terrible blunder—for herself. The position of widows in India, save in the highest ranks, is unhappy enough : let us admit that in all humility—and admit also in justice that the British are trying to do whatever they can to improve that position. In Kamona's case, being but the daughter of a sonar, however wealthy, the risk she took in her unreserved love for Madhava might have led to the cruellest consequences for herself—had Madhava been but the average man. He was no saint. Yet, the saint and the sinner jostle each other in the same man. It was Kamona's implicit trust in him that aroused in him his blood of chivalry. Verily she had said to him, not in spoken words, but in a thousand loving deeds, that the word of the high-born was better than his bond. Thus Kamona conquered.

She was the veiled woman who came to thank Barath in his darkest hour for his new merciful law that gave her hope of wifhood, motherhood. Madhava married her soon after with the fullest rites.

Vashista, the High Priest of Vishnu, aged rapidly. His days were already more than the allotted span of life, but the supreme effort to see the fulfilment of his purpose had kept him alive. Now, in the reaction after his failure, the forces sustaining him were suddenly withdrawn. He was glad, having nothing to live for. He died soon after in the Temple, calmly.

And you, my English brother ? You may hate him, with good cause. But do him even this justice : unwittingly he has revealed your greatest weaknesses in India. In that he has done you a service—which none but he in his fearlessness could have done. He

may have tried to shake the foundations of your empire in India, for precisely in such a manner you may find India lost to you, to-morrow: without a Barath's love to save your cause. But now arise and strengthen those foundations—by removing their weaknesses. Do not believe those who tell you that you must rely on physical force. They presume on the gentleness of the Hindu who tell you that: they forget that there may be some truth in the prophecy that the meek shall possess the earth. Even now things are happening that will make mere physical force a broken reed—for the coast-line of India is very large. If you have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand, you will see and hear and understand. Instead, try moral influence alone of the best and noblest kind. Believe me in that; perhaps I am one of the trustees of the moral perception of this age. Believe me, and try to turn the coming conflict of East and West into concord. . . .

There remains for you to make an act of reparation. Even as this chronicle is given to the world, there comes the news that the most important portion of Buddha's ashes has been discovered near Peshawar in northern India. The Emperor Kanishka built a monument over the tomb containing them. And now the tomb has been discovered and excavated—and the casket containing the ashes of Buddha's cremated body, including three charred bones, has been removed and sent to Simla for inspection.

Now, my English brother, pause and think. There are four hundred million Buddhists in Asia who regard these relics as the most sacred object on earth. Besides them, there are two hundred and thirty million Hindus

in India to whom Buddha's ashes are also precious. No doubt it is customary for European writers to say that though Buddhism began in India, there are few Buddhists there to-day. That is one of the many instances of the failure of European writers to convey the truth about India. In reality all Hindus are in a sense Buddhists. Buddha's mission was, not to preach a new religion, but to restore the pristine Hindu doctrines of karma and reincarnation. Thus Buddha did not claim to found a new religion, but merely to reform Hinduism by bringing it back to its pristine purity. Hindus accepted his reformation, but they had no occasion to call themselves by a new name. It was only the new nations beyond India—who learnt the doctrines of karma and reincarnation for the first time—who had to call themselves by a new name, and therefore called themselves Buddhists. Thus Buddha's ashes are the most sacred object on earth to the four hundred million "Buddhists" beyond India, and a holy relic to the two hundred and thirty million Hindus in India.

Now, pause and think. If the doctrine of the Ascension were not an integral part of Christianity, and if the Sacred Ashes were discovered on Calvary to-day—I ask what would be the feelings of Christendom if the Sacred Ashes were removed and sent to Constantinople for the Sultan's inspection?

That is precisely what is happening in India to-day. It is no excuse to say that, after the inspection, Buddha's ashes will be sent to some country where "Buddhism" is the official religion. Buddha's ashes are India's greatest asset—and Britain, as India's trustee, will have perjured her honour if she barter them away.

I warn you of that, my brother. See that the ashes are replaced in their resting-place, with the proper expiations, and with new honours. If your representatives in India do not see the necessity for that restoration, it will be the culminating proof that their moral perception has failed, and that they do wrong unwittingly.

This chronicle is all but ended. In giving it to the world I am told that I am trusting to the generosity of England : that if it were France that ruled India, and this chronicle dealt with the French, a frenzied multitude would burn it on Montmartre. On the contrary, I have to trust to the justice of England, aye, her gratitude ; in some degree of the entire West. If you have eyes to see you will see.

There remains to mention him who opened this chronicle. Viswa-mitra, now hoary and sightless, still retains the heart of a child. He lives in his old apartments in the palace, and when the young men come to make obeisance he imparts to them something of his own sweetness.

"Be gentle, my children, be gentle," he ever tells them. "There is no room for rage, but for love. Conquer all things by love. Conquer even England by love. Believe me, you will obtain more from England this very day by love than by rage. Be gentle, my children, be gentle." That is his daily lesson.

Murmuring the words, "Conquer all things by love," he will pass to his rest : for the call to rest is at hand.

And Barath and Suvona ? Did they marry and live happily ever after, with their children and children's

children yet to come ? They would have, had they been ordinary mortals.

A Hindu marriage of ceremony needs several months of preliminaries. In that time Barath was constantly with Suvona, teaching her. Gradually he led her to the doctrine of love : the highest love. So gradually that she accepted all his teachings unreservedly, lovingly ; for she felt that the essence of love was the perfect union of souls. That they gave to each other in the fullest measure. So, all through his teachings she grew more and more his beloved—and more and more his disciple.

Then before the earlier ceremonies could actually begin, he had to perform an act of renunciation on his part. He took Nora's garland and burnt it at his private altar. He collected the ashes in a silver casket, and made a pilgrimage to the Ganges where his mother had died. In mid-stream, beside his mother's ashes, he deposited the ashes of Nora's garland.

Returning from his pilgrimage of renunciation, he taught Suvona the doctrine of renunciation. She did not understand at first, but accepted his teachings lovingly, implicitly. Because of that implicit trust and acceptance she at last grew to *feel* like him.

Thus she accepted his final teaching without even knowing what she had done. For a moment it might have surprised her, but now, feeling alike with him in all things, she realised that already her inmost heart had unconsciously learnt that final lesson.

And that final lesson was that even as the essence of love was the union of souls, the manifestation of love in the supremest degree was renunciation. Re-signed renunciation.

They were married with the fullest rites. "For, beloved," he explained to her, "a wife has the same power as her husband to adopt an heir. And an heir is necessary for our throne."

Then he bade her farewell. She was sad, yet not sad : it was enough that she was spiritually his wife. Would she be more ? Then the day would come when she would be, not only his beloved and his disciple, but his beloved disciple. He might have others, a thousand others, but she would be the most loved of them all.

Barath went out of the palace, into the world. . . .

Search for him, O my masters, somewhere between the upper Ganges and Buddh-Gaya, or between Benares and Nasik. Somewhere there you will find him sitting beneath a bodhi tree, awaiting his call. The New Krishna has not come, for indeed Barath was not he : but the world may hope for a New Buddha. One who will teach all earth anew the doctrine of peace ; one who will turn the armaments of West and East of our generation from instruments of carnage into instruments of industry. Yes, a new Teacher is now due, call him what you may. In the coming Era of Altruism the place of fulfilment may be Siberia, or the United States of America, but the Teacher will probably come out of India. I am but a reed shaken by the wind, but I have come to make straight his path—if he be Barath. He will be Barath. In that hope I shall live. . . .

Suvona has adopted an heir from among the scions of the House of Rama, a pretty little boy upon whom she lavishes all her heart. When the Council of Regency has ended its task and the child sits upon the

throne of Barathpur, he will go forth in state to learn wisdom at the feet of the great Teacher. For then he will have begun his mission, teaching India, then all the earth.

To you, my brother, and to me also he will teach a personal lesson, the greatest that man can learn, even this : When all the loves in his heart are sped and all the ties of his heart are sundered, then mortal man becomes deathless.

Await that hour of Barath's returning. Meanwhile *salaam alekhum*, peace be with you !

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